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CURRICULUM: A TEACHER'S GUIDE.

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THE INTRODUCTION OF AFRO-FRENCH LITERATURE AND
CULTURE IN THE AMERICAN SECONDARY SCHOOL
CURRICULUM: A TEACHER'S GUIDE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of The Ohio
State University

By

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Approved by

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my mother, Mrs. Leola Brown Bostick who, from my earliest introduction to formal study to the time of her death, was a constant source of encouragement and assistance; and who instilled in me the faith to persevere in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, I solemnly dedicate this volume.

H.F.B.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To list all of the people who contributed in no small measure to the completion of this study would be impossible in the limited space generally reserved to acknowledgements in studies of this kind. Therefore, I shall have to be content with expressing to this nameless host my deepest appreciation. However, there are a few who went beyond the "call of duty" in their assistance and encouragement, not only in the preparation of this dissertation but throughout my years of study toward the Doctor of Philosophy Degree, whose names deserve to be mentioned here and to whom a special tribute of thanks must be paid. Among these are Dr. Edward D. Allen, Professor of Foreign Language Education, whose professional skill, wise counsel, and generous encouragement guided me during my years of graduate study and through the completion of this dissertation; Dr. Martha Frosch who was first to encourage me to study toward the doctoral degree and who has sustained a constant interest in my professional career; Mrs. Johnnie Dixon Bell and the 201 French Class of the Samuel Howard Archer High School for their invitation to use their class to experiment in integrating Afro-French literature and culture in a regular high school French class, and for their generous and enthusiastic cooperation throughout the period of
the experiment; Mrs. Lamar Robinson for the many long and tedious hours spent in typing the manuscript; Mrs. Clara Bostick Scott, my sister, who graciously and carefully managed my personal business during my years of study at the Ohio State University; Mr. Matthew H. Dawson who did promptly and with efficiency all of the numerous "minor" things which must be done but which the preoccupied graduate student can never find time to do for himself.
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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

My book is not a polemic. It comes, by chance, when the hour strikes. The Negro question is of the present.

René Maran

At the conclusion of a "lecture commentée" on the great periods and personalities in French History in an intermediate French class, one student asked, "Sir are there no black Frenchmen?" On the surface, this question appears to be a simple inquiry from an interested student. But when one considers it in the light of the prevailing mood and concern among the current generation of high school and college students who are black, its implication and over-tone ring with the sound of a clarion for foreign language study in the American public school.

In the thrust for full integration of the Afro-American into the mainstream of American life and culture, pressure has been brought to bear on curriculum innovators at the high school and college levels to select and utilize in the classroom teaching materials that more accurately reflect the contributions of the black man to western civilization.

Reacting to an environment characterized by deep-seated racial prejudice and exclusion, the Afro-American is now
demanding that he be accorded his academic due by including in the curriculum of American schools and colleges courses of study by and about the black man—his history, his literature, his art, his culture—thereby recognizing and dignifying his personal self-concept and intellectual capabilities.

Today's young Afro-American has discovered a new awareness of himself as a descendant of an ancient but highly developed civilization. He has been stimulated to make a new evaluation of the American heritage and of the role that his forebears played in making this heritage secure for all citizens. Embittered by long-festering racial prejudices and incited by the deep yearning for full recognition and participation in the "American dream", the young Afro-American in an increasing number of the nation's cities and on many college and university campuses has resorted to open confrontation in an effort to effect curricular innovations that will provide a more accurate account of his progenitors in American life and history.

The student's question quoted above is typical of the questions being raised almost daily in the foreign language classroom, overtly or covertly, by Afro-Americans who are enrolled in a French class. They have learned about Haiti and Toussaint L'Overture, about Martinique and Guadeloupe, and about French West Africa. Many have read such works as W. E. B. DuBois' The World and Africa, Langston Hughes' Poems from Black Africa which includes translations of poems of some of the most celebrated Afro-French poets, and Franz
Fanon's *The Wretched of The Earth* and, above all, *Black Skin, White Masks*. Their interests and intellectual appetites have been stimulated to read in the French class, selections from the works of some Afro-French authors along with those of Hugo, Lamartine, Verlaine and Camus. Imbued with a passionate zeal for establishing his own identity as a first-class citizen and member of an ethnic background worthy of recognition and respect, the black American student is openly suspicious of everything from which the Black man is excluded, be it language, literature, religion, art, government or war. He not only wants to be included; he is demanding that he be included.

In the Afro-American search for identity, the emergence and growing importance of the recently independent African nations has given birth to a new international interest and concern for Black peoples everywhere and to a fervent desire for first-hand knowledge about their contribution to world civilization. This Black consciousness on the part of Afro-Americans has immediate significance for the French curriculum, since many of the new African republics have French as their official language. Today, Black students in the public schools and colleges are demanding that courses in French language, literature, and civilization include works by and about Black writers from these African nations as well as from Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe and other French-speaking territories to the south of the United States.

In his book, *Le Noir, Morceaux choisis de vingt-neuf*
Français célèbres, published in 1934, W. Mercer Cook of Howard University wrote:

The Negro has not been overlooked in French literature to the same extent that he has been neglected in the French classes of our Negro schools and colleges. Aside from two texts on Toussaint Louverture, there is perhaps no other book in the field; and yet there is a wealth of materials on the subject of the colored man in French literature.... Our students, like all students, need the classics, the Molières, the Corneilles, and the Racines. Let them continue to have them! But in addition, let them know what has been written concerning them in this beautiful foreign tongue, the intricacies of which they are attempting to master.

The curriculum that provoked Professor Cook to become concerned about the absence of the black man in the course materials used in French classes still remains unchanged in the majority of American schools and colleges today.

The task of effecting change in the French curriculum rests with French teachers and curriculum specialists. Of course, the teachers and specialists will need to have adequate information about literary publications in French by and about Blacks. They will need carefully formulated curricular guidelines, and suggested methods and techniques for utilizing these materials in the classroom. Such a curricular tool designed especially for the purpose of enriching the study in French language, literature, and culture in American schools and colleges currently does not exist. And without such a tool, any effort to plan and implement an enriched curriculum that is academically sound and socially relevant will be a "leap in the dark" and may do irreparable damage to the study of French in this country. Therefore, the
need for developing a guide for introducing Afro-French literature and culture in the curriculum of the American schools becomes immediately apparent.

Few high school teachers of French are professionally prepared to introduce their students to the culture and literature of French-speaking Africa on their own. It has been only recently that American colleges and universities have included courses in Afro-French literature and civilization in their curriculum. For so long, Africa was the "dark continent," unknown and impenetrable to the average western man. There was thought to be no need for courses in Afro-French letters and culture. Most often the little that American college students preparing to teach French in high school learned about French West Africa and the French West Indies was by way of the writings of Frenchmen, not Africans. Though beneficial, the knowledge gleaned from those writers is insufficient to prepare one for introducing the highly complexed cultural and literary heritage of the French-speaking African to American teenagers. The teacher needs to become acquainted with the African's view of himself, and of his life and culture as portrayed in his own works. He needs to have an understanding of the themes operant within the particular culture if he is to help his students derive from the printed page the authentic meaning of the words written thereon.¹

If provided with a guide designed and written with the express purpose of aiding the classroom teacher in introducing effectively Afro-French literature and culture in a regular French class in the secondary school, an alert teacher with good audiolingual competency in French and who is willing to do some additional reading and planning on his own, can successfully lead his students to a greater knowledge and enjoyment in their study of French as the lingua franca of more than a dozen different nationalities of African descent. This dissertation is an effort to provide the classroom teacher with such a tool.

**Purpose and Scope**

The purpose of this study is three-fold: (1) to provide a guide for the introduction of Afro-French literature and culture in the curriculum of the secondary school; (2) to acquaint the classroom teacher of French with the vast body of Afro-French literary and aesthetic expression that currently exists; (3) to suggest techniques for utilizing these works for the enrichment of the study of French in the American high school. Implicit in the overall purpose of this study is the belief that introducing secondary students of French to selected Afro-French literary and cultural contributions will aid Afro-Americans in developing a healthy self and group concept, thus eradicating from their minds the popular stereo-type image of their black brothers as uncivilized and unlettered savages. It is further believed that
direct contact and study of Afro-French writings will also help the caucasian to develop a deeper understanding, appreciation, and, hopefully, an acceptance of peoples of color who have made a tangible contribution to the French language, literature and culture.

In scope this study includes only the published works of writers of African ancestry who speak French as their native language and who employ this language as their principal vehicle of expression in their works. It presents suggested approaches and techniques for teaching six aesthetic genres; a poem, a narrative, a play, a novel, a folk song and an essay, representing the literature and culture of French speaking republics of Africa and of the Caribbean Islands. In view of the fact that this study is designed for use in the American secondary school, all examples of Afro-French literature and culture have been chosen with high school students in mind. Therefore, the writer has included only examples that he believes to be commensurate with their level of competency in reading French, appropriate in content for their mental and chronological age, and representative of authentic Afro-French thought and culture. Moreover, the writer has included in the body of this study only examples of Afro-French literature that he has taught in a high school French class. Other recommended works for this level are listed in Chapter VII.
Limitation

This study presents a plan for introducing selected examples of six genres of Afro-French creative expression in the curriculum of the American high school. These six genres are poetry, the narrative or folktale, a play, a novel, a folk song and an essay. Other examples of Afro-French literature and culture were not included for reasons which space and time will not allow to be discussed here. Since the primary concern in the foreign language classroom is that of equipping the learners with audio-lingual skills in the target language, those genres that are accessible and that conform more closely to the goals and objectives of an audio-lingual classroom in the secondary school have been selected. Hence, its suitability for other levels of instruction (elementary or college) is questionable.

Organization

Generally speaking, this study is divided into two main parts. In Part I, consisting of the first five chapters, the writer presents those social, philosophical and religious ideas, beliefs, traditions and customs that are indigenous to the peoples of French West Africa and the West Indies and that constitute the fountainhead of Afro-French literary and cultural expression. In Part II, he suggests methods, techniques, and materials for integrating into a regular high school French class literary selections drawn from six different genres of Afro-French literature and culture. Stated more succinctly, the writer makes available
in a single volume important background information about the French-speaking peoples of African descent and practicable suggestions for enriching the teaching and learning of French in the average high school classroom, in the hope that this format will prove more usable and attractive to the teacher.

This study consists of seven chapters. Chapter I gives a general introduction to the major problem of concern. It includes the statement of purpose, scope, and limitation of the study. Chapter II presents, in condensed form, a description of some of the major social institutions, beliefs, traditions and customs prevalent among French-speaking Africans and West Indians. Chapter III treats African music and dance and its role and influence in Afro-French creative expression. Chapter IV describes the significance of the myth in African life and culture as it is made manifest in Afro-French literary and aesthetic creativity. Chapter V treats the origin, definition, characteristics and development of the concept of Négritude in Afro-French literary and cultural expression. Chapter VI may be considered the "pièce de résistance" of the study. In this chapter the writer presents suggested methods, techniques, and materials recommended for teaching several different literary genres of Afro-French creative expression ranging from the folk song to the novel. The final chapter presents suggestions for selecting Afro-French teaching materials and classroom aids, recommended readings for the first four levels of high school French, and
a list of sources from which these and other materials may be obtained.

Review of Literature

There exist numerous annotated bibliographies of published works by native French authors, and by authors who are not natives of French but whose ancestry is European. It is doubtful that a single similar compendium of published writings in French by Black authors exists anywhere today. Perhaps the first publication that attempted to bring together in a single volume writings in French about blacks appeared in 1934. It was edited by W. Mercer Cook and bears the title, *Le Noir, Morceaux choisis de vingt-neuf Français célèbre*. It consisted of selected excerpts written by prominent Frenchmen about Blacks. In this work Cook presents twenty-nine famous French authors from "a different point of view"; that is, he introduces his reader to writings about Blacks by some of France's most prominent literators stretching from Montesquieu to Gide. Indeed, this volume was a unique contribution from the standpoint of its contents, but it did more to expose the Frenchmen rather than the Blacks about whom they wrote.

Probably the most noteworthy effort toward presenting the classroom teacher with a volume expressly designed as a pedagogical aid in teaching about African life, civilization, and culture was Albert H. Berrian's *Notebook For Teachers of African Life, History, and Culture* published in
1965. In the foreword to this volume, the author states:

This notebook is intended as a supplementary item for teachers of African life, history, and culture....The hope is that persons using this notebook will be encouraged to do serious reading in the several areas telescoped below.²

This small volume certainly has merit in that it gives a terse introduction to African civilization and culture. But it was designed to supplement the teacher's knowledge of Africa gained via other experiences. Moreover, its focus is on the entire Continent of Africa rather than on those African nations or territories bound together by a common lingua franca and mode of thinking. Thus its value for secondary school teachers of French is minimal.

Several anthologies of Africans have appeared in print over the two decades. Most of these contain works by Afro-French writers but in English translation! Moreover, works by English-speaking Africans compose the greater portion of these publications. The first of these anthologies bears the title, Darkness and Light, An Anthology of African Writings, edited by Peggy Rutherford, and published in London in 1958 by Faith Press, Ltd. A second one is called African Heritage, An Anthology of Black African Personality and Culture, edited by Jacob Drachler, and was published in London by Collier-MacMillan, Ltd., 1964. Two other volumes appeared under the titles of An African Treasury, Articles Essays, Stories, Poems by Black Africans, and Poems from Black

Africa, both edited by Langston Hughes and published by Pyramid Books of New York and the Indiana University Press of Bloomington in 1961 and 1963 respectively. Since these volumes include only works in English, their usefulness in the French classroom is obviously limited. Nevertheless, they are excellent for supplementary reading and merit a place in the French teacher's professional library or in the school's library.

Two other publications deserve to be mentioned here. The first one is Léopold Sédar Senghor's Anthologies de la Nouvelle Poésie Nègre et Malgache published in Paris in 1948. This anthology contains many of the poems of many of the leading Black poets from French West Africa, the Caribbean Islands, French Guiana and Madagascar. Besides, Senghor gives a brief biographical sketch of each of the poets whose works are included. It is in this anthology also that Jean-Paul Sartre's celebrated essay entitled "Orphée Noir" first appeared as its preface. A very scholarly collection, it is limited to poetry, much of which will prove beyond the grasp of most high school students and the poetic sophistication of many secondary school French teachers. The second publication bears the title, Panorama de la Poésie Haitienne, edited by Carlos St. Louis and Maurice A. Lubin, and published in 1950 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The volume contains the poems of approximately 150 poets. In the "avant-propos" the editors present a brief resumé of the
development of Haitian literature. They include also a brief biographical sketch of each poet. In terms of its utility in the secondary school French class, this volume has the same shortcomings as that of Senghor. However, if they were available, they would be excellent reference materials for the teacher. Senghor's anthology would make an excellent textbook for an advanced course in poetry of Négritude at the college or university level. But for their usefulness in the high school classroom, they would be quite unsuitable even though written in French.

Periodically during the past quarter of a century scholarly articles analyzing the works of a single author or a group of authors have appeared in many of the leading literary journals. Many of these papers included a bibliography of related works by and about the authors, but their value as materials for enriching the study of French in the secondary school through the integration of (Black literature of French expression) is extremely restricted.

In an article entitled, "Suggestions for the Teaching of Negro Literature of French Expression", which appeared in the French Review for April, 1969, Rachel F. Deutch presents suggestions for integrating works by Black writers into the course of study in elementary and advanced French classes. This article goes further than any other toward providing a

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3 Notably the French Review.
guide for introducing writings by Blacks into the regular French study program. Though limited in scope, Deutch's article points up the need for a more comprehensive teaching guide for making the literary and cultural contributions of Black writers an integral phase of the study of French in the secondary school.

Contributions To The Study of French in High School

This guide to introducing Afro-French literature and culture in the high school curriculum is a plan for expanding the learner's knowledge and appreciation of the literature and culture of peoples whose language is French but whose heritage and exteriors differ from those of the citizens of Metropolitan France. As a teacher's guide it will introduce the classroom teacher to a vast repository of literary and cultural works written in excellent French through which he can open to his student a new world of ideas, traditions, concepts, and ideologies.

Like English, the French language and culture embrace a large number of ethnic and national groups. Almost all of them have produced some outstanding literary works; but unfortunately, they have not found their way into the American classroom, and, except for very rare cases, into the public school library. Once the classroom teacher is provided with a carefully prepared guide, it is hoped that he will be able to attract and retain a larger number of students who will continue their study of French. Such a course of study will
expose the learners to a broad spectrum of many lands, peoples and cultures. Since each group has made its unique contribution to the French language, literature, and culture, the study of Afro-French literature and culture will make the American high school student aware of the role that the French-speaking Black nations throughout the world have played in not only preserving the beautiful language of Hugo, Claudel and Mallarmé but in enriching it. He will learn how diverse cultures can use the same medium of communication to express diverse concepts, and ideologies.
I have known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins. My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Langston Hughes

Broadly defined, literature is the collective written expression of a people, a race, a group. It is the aggregate representation of the culture that nurtures it. Nowhere is this more visibly manifest than in Afro-French literary creations. Because Afro-French literature is heavy laden with myths, customs, beliefs, and rituals that are unfamiliar to the average American secondary school teacher of French, it seems appropriate to present a telescopic description of these institutions, concepts, customs, and traditions that form an integral part of the life and culture of French-speaking Africans and of their descendants.

In her publication, Teaching for Cross-Cultural Understanding, Tora T. Ladu defines culture as "all the patterned ways of behavior, including the thought processes and beliefs, of a given people."¹ She explains that:

No customs, belief, or behavior can be understood out of its sociocultural context. That is, any items of behavior, any tradition or pattern can be evaluated correctly only in the light of its meaning to the people who practice it, its relation to other elements of the culture, and the part it plays in the adaptation of the people to their environment or to one another. No custom is 'odd' to the people who practice it.  

These words are most appropriate for beginning a description of the social institutions, traditions, customs, and beliefs that undergird the life and culture of Black Africans. For too long, authentic African life and culture was shrouded in mystery and misrepresentation. Often described by Europeans who evaluated this civilization using their own standards, Africa emerged labeled as the "Dark Continent" where bizarre and savage customs and traditions held sway. Although anthropologists, historians, and other scholars of African life and culture have contributed significantly toward changing this distorted image, many Americans still conjure up a tropical environment filled with ferocious and savage animals and Tarzan-like human beings swinging from trees when Africa is mentioned. Therefore, the first step in a plan for introducing Afro-French literature and culture in the American high school classroom is for the teacher to become thoroughly knowledgeable about those social institutions, traditions, and ideologies that constitute the foundation on which the society or nation rests and give to it its cohesion and solidarity as well as its distinguishing

\[\text{Ibid., p. 5.}\]
Afro-French writers, in the main, treat the same themes in their works as one finds in the writings of other peoples of the world. Since their orientation, background, and environment differ from writers of other cultures, it follows that their perception and treatment of these themes will be different. They will be Africans, though expressed in a European language. The Ghanian sociologist, K. A. Busia, expresses this idea very effectively in the following words:

> When we think of a people's world-view we consider their concept of the supernatural, of nature of man and society, and of the ways in which these concepts form a system that gives meaning to men's lives and actions.

It should be borne in mind that Afro-French writers of the Twentieth Century write for their fellow Africans or their Black brothers of other lands with whom they identify. Thus they focus inward and draw on their indigenous beliefs, customs, and mores for their inspiration and contents. Although they write in French, their perception, orientation, inspiration and sensitivity vis-à-vis life and the world is basically African. Therefore, one who seeks to understand fully and to appreciate the products of their creative genius must first acquaint himself with the institutions and traditions from which they spring.

Ethno-graphically and geographically, there are many

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Africans and Africas. Even among those whose lingua franca is French, one recognizes the existence of different tribes, traditions, and customs. Therefore, in discussing the socio-cultural institutions and traditions among French-speaking Blacks, one has to look for that group or civilization that is the hub from which the various other groups and cultures sprang. According to the American anthropologist and scholar, Melville J. Herskovits, the Dahomean civilization and cultural influences are the most pronounced among the French-speaking black populations of both West Africa and the West Indies. Herskovits describes the link between the cultures of these two geographically distant peoples as follows:

The majority of African traits, however, derive from the geographical center of the slaving areas, especially from the region of Dahomey. Even the famous word 'voodoo' is Dahomean, as all Haitian writers and some European and African have recognized. Whatever its meaning in Haiti at the present time, its derivation is clear. It is the vodun of the Fon-speaking people, a word which is best translated as 'god' ...names of (Haitian) gods, and social and economic institutions point their origin to this same Dahomean force.  

The position of Herskovits is supported by Lilyan Kesteloot as she explains:

Le cas d'Haiti est sans doute l'un des plus remarquables. Voici une société d'esclaves brutalement arrachées à leur condition d'hommes libres, à leur natale dahoméenne, déportés dans des villages con-centrationnaires. Les groupes

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familiens se sont disloqués comme les cadres politiques africaines. Or les dieux de l'Afrique survivent, prodigieusement vivaces. Ils dévorèrent même les saints du catholicisme, ou plus exactement les plièrent à leur règle s'en firent des masques pour déjouer la vigilance des maîtres blancs. Le culte de vaudou, deux ou trois siècles après l'exil tragique, est demeuré la véritable religion nationale d'Haiti, en dépit d'un Concordat que les maîtres ont signé avec l'Eglise de Rome.

(Without a doubt the case of Haiti is the most remarkable. Here is a group of slaves brutally torn from their status as free men, from their native Dahomey (and) deported to communities of servitude. Whole families were dislocated like the political boundaries of Africa. But the gods of Africa survived, firmly established. They even devoured the saints of Catholicism, or more precisely, bent them to their own rule, made of them masks of their white masters. Two or three centuries after the tragic exile, the voudou cult has remained the truly national religion of Haiti, despite a concordat which the slave masters signed with the Roman Catholic Church.)

In the light of the information gleaned from these and other anthropological and historical sources examined by the writer, the Dahomean civilization and culture has been selected as the principal African source for this study. This choice should in no way vitiate or circumscribe the value of this study as an introduction to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Afro-French literature and culture. It is true

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that French West Africa is often described as being populated by numerous tribes that follow dissimilar patterns of living, speaking different tribal tongues, and worshipping different gods. But underneath these more or less surface dissimilarities is a basic unity of culture and to a great degree of language. Indeed, there are certain traditions, customs, beliefs, and social patterns common throughout all of Black Africa.

**The Family**

In Black Africa the concept of the family as a social unit may vary from one tribe to another. Nevertheless, underneath these variations, one finds an organizational structure and cohesion that are well integrated and strong. It is true organizational structure and its built-in cohesive strength with which the student of Afro-French life and culture should be acquainted.

Herskovits explains that in the Dahomean society there are three types of social groupings. The primary one is the "hwé" or "the house", composed of a man, his wife or wives, and their children. The second one in size and importance is the extended family, or "gbé", composed of the families of a number of brothers and their sons. The third group, the most extensive and of greatest importance, is composed of the patrilineal sibs or "xénu". This group includes many extended
families which cause it to number sometimes into the hundreds. Some writers label these groupings as "kinship groups", a term which attempts to convey their extended reaches in Dahomean society.

In studying the African family, the student should bear in mind that one man may marry several wives and have children by each one. Hence, the home life of a Dahomean household is greatly conditioned by this practice of plural wives. In this regard the African religion and tradition have established a well ordered family code of conduct to which each family adheres tenaciously. This well-defined and hierarchial family relationship is reflected in the arrangement of the dwellings that house the family unit.

The dwellings that house the Dahomean family are divided into three groups. They are the house, the compound, and the collectivity. A "house" may be conceived of as a wife and her children. Since the wife does not share her husband's house there is a dwelling for each wife conforming to the widespread belief that it is unwise for two wives to occupy the same dwelling. The compound is composed of an aggregate of buildings and is most often surrounded by a wall. It is here that the primary family resides. In addition to the dwellings for each wife, one will find individual dwellings reserved for the husband and father of the family, for his brothers and adult sons who live with him.

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for the work of the ancestors, for the head of the compound to consult his Destiny (Fa), and for storage purposes. The collectivity consists of from two to five neighboring compounds in which members of the extended family live.  

For a full understanding of the organization and function of the African family, one must be made knowledgeable of the fact that the patrilineal sib includes both the living and dead descendants of its founder. It is he who rules over the destiny of all the living members of the family in such a way as to assure to it continued growth and prosperity. He is aided in his task by all of his dead ancestors. By a well established tradition of inheritance rights, the oldest living male is always the head of the family, and the direct link with the family ancestors.

Within the primary family unit, the relationship between the father and his children is most often a very distant and stern one. The intimate personal relationship common in American families exists only between the mother and her children. The African is linked to his father's family by law, but to his mother's family by love and affection. Hence he is more responsive to the matriarchial side of his family. This warm and affectionate relationship between mother and children may be attributed to the fact that the children share the house of their mother until the age of puberty for boys and until marriage for girls. Their contact with the father

\[7\text{Ibid.}, p. 137.\]
is less frequent and more formal.

Concerning the role of the wife and mother in the African family, Leopold S. Senghor writes:

La femme occupe, en Afrique noire, la première place; y occupait la première place—La femme, parce que 'permanente' de la famille et donneuse de vie, a été promue en source de force vitale et gardienne de la maison, c'est-à-dire dépositaire du passé et garant de l'avenir classique. Dans un passé assez récent, qui n'a pas disparu partout, on était de la famille de sa mère; le régime familial était celui du matriarcat. Aujourd'hui encore, chez les Sérères du Sine, on fait suivre le prénom de l'enfant par celui de sa mère.8

(In Black Africa, the wife held and does hold first place—Because she is constantly with her family and is the donor of life, the wife has been assigned the role of fountainhead of vital strength and guardian of the home, that is, the depository of the past and the guarantor of the traditional future. During a fairly recent past an individual belonged to his mother's family; the family pattern was matriarchial. The practice has not (yet) disappeared everywhere. Today the Serere tribe still continues the practice of following the first name of a child with that of his mother.)

In the Caribbean, especially among the Haitians, the family, composed of mother, father, and offsprings, forms the base of the social organization. Though the family includes a wide range of relatives, the complex system of

inheritedances and the hierarchy of patrilineal sibs characteristic of the African family has been lost. Herskovits explains this loss thus:

The African who peopled Haiti, coming from cultures where descent is counted solely on the side of the mother or the father, and coming into contact with the French, whose custom binds children with equal strength to the families of both parents, molded both traditions into the social forms found today not only in Mirebalais, but, in their essential outlines, throughout the Republic.

Birth and Puberty

The bearing of children is perhaps the most important role of the wife in African society. In due course of time after marriage a wife is expected to become pregnant. If pregnancy does not occur, a diviner is consulted and measures are taken to ward off the malevolent force that is believed to be preventing conception.

In most cases, there are no set rules that dictate in which compound a child must be born. The birth may take place in either its father's compound or in the compound of its maternal grandmother. However, in those cases where the children belong to the father's family, custom has it that the mother will give birth to them in the father's compound.

For the normal child, there is no special ceremony or célébration connected with its birth. The mother and child are cared for by a mid-wife and other knowledgeable females

*A village in central Haiti.

of the compound. There are different accounts as to the manner of disposing of the placenta and the umbilical cord.

When the naval cord dries and drops off, it is taken by members of the father's sib to the fields belonging to the family, where it is buried under a palm-tree... When the child grows up, the palm kernels from this tree are his.  

points out that the burying of the naval cord beneath a wealth producing tree has a religious importance in the later life of the child.

Surrounding the birth of a child with physical defects is a large body of beliefs and myths, ranging from a curse visited by an angered ancestor to good fortune and supernatural power. In some cases, depending on the circumstances and the nature of the abnormality, these children are "sent back" to their creator, that is, they are taken to a river bank and deposited there. However, many children with birth defects are kept and cared for with special attention because often they are believed to be endowed with supernatural powers.

The most highly prized category of births are twins. These infants are treated with great care. They are always dressed alike, and all gifts given to them must be in duplicate. In case of death of one of the twins a small wooden image is carved and the surviving twin keeps it with

Among some African societies there are twins cults since they are believed to be endowed with supernatural powers.

Great care is exercised by the parents in selecting names for the child. Most Africans have several names and the ones given them at the time of birth are of particular significance. These names are usually kept secret on the belief that one who would wish to work evil magic against the child in his later life would have a decided advantage in being successful if he had knowledge of the names given the persons at birth.

Indicative of the importance attached to a name is the meticulous care shown in selecting the appellation for a tribe as well as for a child. Ladislas Segy gives the following account on the significance of the names in the Bantu Culture:

The tribal name, however, is more than an appellation, as a name in Western civilization. It has magical powers. Thus the Bantu-speaking tribes distinguish three types of names. (1) One to represent the individual's inner self; (2) the second represents spiritual quality; it differs from the first name in that its power can be increased or decreased. The name is acquired at the initiation ceremony when the adolescent is admitted into the adult secret society; (3) the third name is what we may call the 'name of address' by which he is known in daily life. The first two names may not be pronounced; knowledge of them by an outsider would put him in possession of a vital essence of the person so named,

11 Ibid., p. 262.
which could be used in witchcraft to harm him.\footnote{Ladislas Segy, "Aspects of The Study of African Art," Phylon, XIX (Fall, 1958), 384.}

As was stated earlier, African children live with their mothers during their formative years. With the beginning of puberty Dahomean boys no longer sleep in the house of their mothers. Instead, all of the boys of a given compound or collectivity form a group and build a house in which they sleep. However, they still take their meals at their mother's house and they take pride in the construction of their communal dwelling.

Girls at the age of puberty remain in the house of their mothers or of their paternal grandmothers. It is at this age in their growing up that the youths are separated. The girls gather in the evening with an older lady of the compound to tell stories, while the boys congregate in their "house" and engage in the exchange of amorous tales both real and imagined. During the age of puberty, the two sexes often meet clandestinely to play traditional Dahomean games. But in most cases, these games do not lead to sexual contact.

There are no puberty ceremonies for Dahomean boys as exist among some of the African tribes. Except for circumcision which is done for hygenic precautions, and the filing of the teeth and the giving of the facial "clan" cuts, there are no ceremonial rites indicating the boy's passage from childhood into manhood. However, there are such rites for girls and these are big social occasions. The only feature
of these rites that may not be considered as social is the consultation of the Destiny to determine whether good or evil fortune lies ahead for the girl.  

Among the French-speaking population of the Caribbean Islands, the customs and practices surrounding the age of puberty for boys and girls have been so greatly influenced by Western civilization that hardly any vestiges of African culture remain. The education and training given the youths of these countries is centered in the home and is greatly influenced by the communal mores and practices. Except for separate schools for boys and girls (which is a vestige of French rule) Caribbean youths are not separated when they attain the age of puberty. Association between the sexes is relatively relaxed and the incidents of pre-marital sex relations are fairly common.

**Courtship and Marriage**

There are two pre-marital practices for girls in the Dahomean culture that should be mentioned prior to discussing courtship and marriage. These are (1) training in sex education and household duties and the practice of cicatrization. During her adolescence, the Dahomean girl attends a "school" with other girls of her age in the compound where she learns about marriage and caring for her family. The practice of cicatrization among females is done as an enhancement of the erotic zones. The varied patterns used on

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different parts of the body afford different degrees of aesthetic pleasure, chiefly in sex play.

Basically there are two types of marriages among the French-speaking natives of West Africa: legitimate and illegitimate. The legitimate marriage by tradition obligates the bridegroom to give the bride's father certain payments dictated by custom which, in turn, will assure to him control of all children born to the marriage. The illegitimate marriage does not bind the bridegroom to any obligations and, though the children are members of their father's sib, the control over them rests in the hands of the mother or of her family.

In many African societies the first marriage of a young man is principally decided by his parents and those of his bride. It should be said here that this practice is not so frequent today among some of the African peoples as in the past. According to the tradition, the young man, while courting his future wife, goes often to her mother's house. If she is to be his first wife, he spends much time there and frequently eats with her family. After he becomes engaged to the girl, he has to begin performing the duties that custom dictates that he performs for his prospective parents-in-law, such as providing a generous supply of firewood for his fiancee's mother and working the fields (with the assistance of his male friends) of her father. There are also certain obligations that the prospective son-in-law must perform in connection with the funeral ceremonies of
close relatives of his fiancee's family. Concerning these obligations to the dead, Herskovits writes:

The most serious expenditures that a fiancé or son-in-law must make, however, are in connection with the funeral ceremonies of closely related members of the woman's family, and no account of marriage and its obligations would be completed without an indication of the manner in which this obligation must be discharged. When a death occurs, so important are the duties of a relative-in-law, actual or prospective, held to be that the penalty for failure to perform them is immediate divorce if the marriage has taken place, or a breaking off of the engagement, if the girl has not yet come to live in his compound.  

In a traditional marriage, the girl goes to her future husband's compound. But two days prior to her leaving the family circle, her father performs a ceremonial rite in which he feeds the spirit of the founder of the family, the defied souls of the sib ancestors, and the gods of the pantheon of which his daughter is a member. This ceremony is quiet and solemn; no drums or other musical instruments are used. The bridegroom makes similar sacrifices to his Destiny. It is his duty also to call in the diviner to set the date of the marriage.

In contrast to the legitimate marriage, the illegitimate or "free marriage" is more popular and most preferred. Perhaps some Westerners will find this form of marriage more romantic and appealing. In a free marriage, the man finds a girl he likes and woos her directly. If he wins her favor, she frequents his compound or meets him clandestinely.

14 Herskovits, Dahomey, p. 304.
elsewhere. The courtship continues in this manner until the parents discover their daughter to be pregnant. They ask her for the name of her lover which she reveals to them. They send for the young man and he comes with his mother or aunt or uncle to get his bride.

Concerning these two types of marriage, Herskovits explains that one general principle obtains for both; that is, as willed by the ancestors, a man may never refuse a woman offered him, just as the proceedings for divorce must always be initiated by the wife's family. Of course, custom allows the man a way out when he is offered a woman whom he does not favor. He may resort to subterfuge and request time to reach a decision, or he may ask for a chance to consult his diviner.

In the Afro-French cultures of the Caribbean, especially in Haiti, there are also two types of marriage. The first type is that of having the sanction of the Church and is symbolized by the wearing of the wedding band. The second type is referred to as "plaçage." In this form of marriage, the man and the woman agree to live together, where upon they fulfill certain obligations and participate in certain matrimonial ceremonies at the woman's house and they are husband and wife. Both types of marriage are considered as permanent unions by Haitians.

Among the Haitian masses, certain vestiges of African courtship and marriage may be recognized in some of the customs
that surround the acts of wooing and marriage. The common marrying age for a girl is between 15 and 17, while for a man it is between 19 and 21. Before he takes a bride, the young Haitian must have a house with the necessary furnishings, a field, ten or twelve goats, a like number of pigs, a donkey or a horse. Like the African fiancé, the bethrothed Haitian must show "respect" to his fiancée's parents by helping them work their fields and do other needed tasks. The bride's father presents her with similar gifts to take to the union.

The marriage must be agreed to by both the girl's and the young man's parents. Actually it is they who conclude the formal bethrothal agreement. Before the union is consummated each of the bethrothed has to "notify" the familial deities of the proposed marriages by performing certain sacrificial rites. Besides, the dead of both families are also "notified." This is carried out by a visit to the cemetery by the bethrothed where candles are lighted, an announcement of the marriage is given, and the benevolent aid of the dead in assuring happiness to the couple is solicited. Regulations concerning virginity of the bride are more relaxed in the Afro-French societies of the Caribbean Islands than among their counterparts in French West Africa.

The popularity of the "plaçage" among Haitians can be attributed, in a great measure, to the enormous cost of a

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Church marriage. For people whose annual income is exceedingly meager as is true of the masses in Haiti, it would take many years for a family or an individual to acquire the large sum necessary for a church marriage. The cost and other obligations connected with a "plaçage" union are more commensurate with the average citizen's financial means. Thus the "plaçage" has been accepted by the Haitians as another form of matrimony.

Although the Church has not sanctioned the practice of "plaçage," its influence upon this form of matrimony cannot be ignored. The same as for a Church marriage, the plaçage requires the consent of the parents of both the bride and the groom. It is performed by a "priest" of the voudou cult in full ceremony that includes the chanting of the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, the Credo and the singing of hymns. Once married, divorce is almost as rare among those joined in a plaçage as it is among those married by the Church.

The practice of polygyny is not very widespread in the Caribbean cultures. Catholicism, the official religion of these countries, strongly forbids plural marriage. The negative influence of the Church plus certain legal complications involving inheritances have greatly limited polygynous households. On the other hand, illicit relationships among adults as well as prostitution are very common, especially in the large cities.

16Ibid., p. 113.
Traditions and customs governing marriage and the establishment of a household are constantly being influenced by change brought on by social, political, and technological developments. Therefore, any description of the socio-cultural institutions, customs, and ideologies must be viewed in a fluid rather than a static sense, and current information about them must be the constant concern of the alert and resourceful teacher. In the American culture, traditions governing courtship and marriage have been altered continually and in some cases abandoned. Such alterations and deviations can also be found among Afro-French cultures. However, for this study the writer has presented the traditional forms of matrimony recognized among Afro-French peoples.

Religious and Psychological Orientation

The African is religious by nature. Long before European missionaries introduced Christianity or the Arabs brought the Islamic faith south of the Sahara, Black Africa had a well developed religious system of its own, complete with a Supreme deity, an hierarchy of lesser divinities and priests, and an ordered code of well established ceremonial rites, rituals, beliefs, and customs. The traditional religion of Black Africa is animism. It is a powerful force in African life and culture. So extensive its reach and so closely is it interwoven into the existence of the natives that no segment of life, no matter how insignificant, escapes its influence.
Precisely what is animism and what do Africans believe?

Perhaps the most lucid and concise description of the religious orientation of Black Africa is that of Albert H. Berrian. He writes:

Africans, atavistically speaking, are animists. They believe that spirits exist in every object. The gods are viewed as ontological realities, creating and recreating life, and giving existence to the non-existent. The minor deities are themselves created by the self-existent, which springs from the supreme being, being represented by mother earth. These gods live in a world of cosmic reality, having in themselves 'ontological situ', and possessing moral, immoral, and amoral attributes. Omniscience and omnipotence are relative to these gods, depending upon their individual cosmological nature and their ontological status. It is in his effort to explain intangibles, to give adequate answers to the all-encompassing mysteries of existence, to alleviate sufferings for himself and posterity, that the African resorts to worship of his multifarious gods....Myths, magic, religion and superstition, all serve to explain many of the imponderables of human existence, the formidable order of Gods, and the ways in which lesser gods act as intermediaries between greater gods and the antipedal forces of nature. Beyond the veneer of polytheism, however, is a convincing belief in the Supreme being--this in turn leading to ancestor acts as an intercessor between the mighty god and the human applicator...African religion is marked by widespread emotional response, and African worship is accompanied by emotional concomitants, leading to religious thrills or religious frenzy.17

Because his religion ascribes life to all of nature, the world of the African is dynamic, vibrating and colorful. It is a world where cosmic order and equilibrium are interpreted and experienced by means of the senses--feeling,

sight, smell, and taste. Thus the African views his exterior world subjectively rather than objectively. Furthermore, he intuitively identifies with it and participates in its vitality and movement.

The African scholar, L. V. Thomas, of the University of Dakar gives the following description of the animistic cult of the Diola tribe of Senegal:

L'éléphant fondamental du fétichisme diola, comme celui de tout animisme négro-africain, semble devoir reposer sur l'identification de l'être avec la force vitale. La Pyramide des forces contient, en effet, l'ensemble de tous les êtres animés, parfaitement hiérarchisés et susceptibles de réagir les uns les autres d'après des modalités existentielles nettement définies et qui précèdent avant tout de leur qualité énergique.  

(The fundamental element of the Diola Fetichism, as that of all Black African animism seems to have to be based on the identification of existence with the forces in Nature. In reality, the pyramid of forces includes the whole of all living beings in a perfect hierarchical relationship and capable of reacting on each other according to clearly defined modalities of existence and which takes precedence, above all, over their forcible properties.)

Speaking more specifically on the two principal tenets undergirding animism, Thomas explains:

Le dynamisme, ou plus exactement le pneumatisme du Diola, source de richesse ontologique et existentielle, nous amène à considérer deux idées fondamentales qui sous-tendent la cosmogonie négro-

africaine traditionnelle; la notion d'équilibre des forces, laquelle assure à chaque instant l'unité et la solidité du tout; et le besoin de vie caractérisé par la possibilité du renouvellement. Ces deux thèmes paraissent essentiels pour définir à coup sur la mentalité animiste en général.19

(The dynamism or more precisely the pneumatism of Diola, source of existential and ontological wealth, leads us to consider two basic ideas that underlie traditional Black African cosmogony; the idea of an equilibrium of forces assures at every moment the unity and solidarity of all creation; and the "need to live" characterized by the possibility of regeneration. These two themes seem essential in order to define with certainty the animistic mentality in general.)

In his discussion of the organizational structure of animism as practiced by the Dahomeans, Herskovits states that at the top of the pyramid are the beliefs concerning the Master God or Gods. Next to these are the beliefs governing the numerous familial deities associated with the sibs, and the deities of the ancestors. Third from the top are the beliefs pertaining to the personal deities and diviners. The fourth body of beliefs treats the power and force of magic.20

The British lecturer, Thomas L. Hodgkins, describes the African's hierarchical conception of the cosmos in the following words:

African metaphysic—the typical African

19 Ibid., p. 16.
20 Herskovits, Dahomey, p. 29.
conceives of the world as a hierarchy of force. African social systems order men in a hierarchy of groups. African culture is the complex of activities, symbols, rhythms, through which African man expresses his understanding of the world and society and his sense of unity with them.  

In the French-speaking countries of the West Indies the counterpart to African animism is the popular folk religion called "voudou." Rooted in African theology and ceremonialism it is one of the significant links between the Blacks of the Caribbean and of Black Africa. As was stated earlier, the word "voudou" in Dahomey means "god", a general designation for all deities. However, in the Haitian culture "voudou" signifies an all-powerful and supernatural being on which depends all the events that come to pass on the globe.

Many European and American writers have presented the voudou cult as a "grim system of fantastic and cruel African rites." Stated briefly, voudou is an organized system of African beliefs and rituals that govern to a large degree the religious life of the masses. Co-existing for centuries with Catholicism, the voudou cult has not escaped its influence as the following description of its tenets indicates.

The ruler of the universe is God, its Creator, who shares this task with His Son, Jesus, the saints of the Church, and the Holy Ghost. Man has been

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endowed with a soul, which has come from God, returns to God for judgment and, if necessary for punishment at the end of its sojourn on Earth.23

Although the theology and dogma undergirding voudou are more flexible than that of its African prototype, it has retained much of its hierarchical structure. At the pinnacle of the voudou pyramid is God and next to Him is His Son, Jesus. Surrounding Jesus are the saints or loa with whom He shares the task of running the world. However, the tasks that each of the loa may perform are clearly prescribed by ritual and custom. In other words, God is concerned with the soul of man and is the Creator of Life, while the loa looks after man's well-being on earth—physical, economical, and social. As compared to God's, the power of the loa is very limited. For example, they may protect a garden but they cannot make the vegetables planted therein grow and produce. The latter function rests with the "Gran Maître" or God. Each native has his individual loa to whom he makes periodic sacrifices for protection during his lifetime. When he dies, the members of his family, with the aid of the voudou "priest", take the loa from his head so that his soul can return to God, its Creator.

There are two main features of the voudou cult: (1) the ceremonial worship and (2) the voudou dance. The voudou dance in reality serves a dual function. It is a part of the worship ceremony proper and a social occasion. In an effort

23 Ibid., p. 153.
to clarify any misunderstanding about voudou as a religious cult, Herskovits states:

Once more, in summary, it may be emphasized that voudou, is neither the practice of black magic, nor the unorganized pathological hysteria it is so often represented to be. The gods are known to their worshippers, and the duties owed them are equally well understood. The reward for the performance of these duties is good health, good harvest, and the goodwill of fellowmen; the punishment for neglect is corresponding ill fortune. On this basis of belief is erected the ceremonial worship.24

From such complex and all-embracing religious orientation, it is not surprising that the French-speaking African emerges as a human being highly sensitive to his exterior world. He perceives, experiences, and reacts to his universe by way of his senses. He does not approach it with logic and reason as Western man does. The African feels his world. A classic example of the Black African's keen sensitivity is that related by the Senegalese statesman and poet, Leopold Sedar Senghor, taken from his personal experience as a soldier in the French Army. Senghor writes:

How astonished military psychologists were when they noticed that the Senegalese sharp shooters were more sensitive to climate changes than were the Europeans! The former react to the slightest variations in temperature, the most insignificant incidents, even the slightest inflections of speech. These warriors who had been considered brutes, these heroes, had a woman's sensitivity. However, it had often been said that the Negro is the man of Nature. He is a man of the open air, a man who lives of the earth. And let the word be taken in its cosmic sense. He is a being with open senses, permeable to all solicitations, even to the very waves of nature,

24 Ibid., p. 153.
without intermediary filtrants - I do not say without gaps - between subject and object. A thinking man, to be sure, but he is first of all forms and colours, especially odours, sounds, and rhythm.²⁵

Later in this article, Senghor expresses in more philosophical language this psychological sensitivity peculiar to the Black African. He adds:

First the African Negro is by his colour as in the primordial night. He does not see the object; he feels it. It is the pure sensorial field of the third day development of a worm. It is in his subjectivity, at the end of his sensory organs that he discovers the Other* ... Thus one sees the African Negro who sympathizes and identifies himself, who dies to himself in order to be reborn to the Other. He is not assimilated, he assimilates himself with the Other. He believes with the Other in symbiosis he is born again (connait) to the Other... Here subject and object face each other dialectically in the very instrument of knowledge, which is the instrument of love... The African Negro could say: 'I feel the Other; I dance the Other, therefore I exist.'²⁶

For persons endowed with the capacity to identify in such a subjective way, objects in Nature take on a sacramental character. Water is more than the chemical compound, represented by the symbols, \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \). It is a purifier and a source of life. In giving to objects a sacramental character the African recognizes those qualities essential to its use. He goes beyond the visual object to its "sous-réalité," its sur-reality. According to the Senegalese poet, Lamine


²⁶ *By Other* the author means "Nature" or the "Exterior World."

²⁶ Ibid., p. 50.
Diakhate, "sur-reality does not imply an excess of imagination, but the lyrical rendering of a fact, a way of sublimating a feeling."27 Thus when the African abandons himself to the "sur-reality" he joins together, in a single lyrical feeling a series of objects; namely, God, water, stone, fire. He feels each object because, psychologically, he places himself in relation to each one. In this state he penetrates Nature through each one. It is this "sur-real" knowledge of each one that moves him, not the material knowledge. He then turns to language to translate the emotions so experienced into reality. Of this "sur-real" penetration of objects, Senghor says:

> Forces hidden behind them, govern them, animating these visible things, giving them colour and rhythm, life and meaning. It is precisely this meaning which imposes itself on the consciousness and provokes an emotion. Still more precisely, emotion is this seizure of the whole being - mind and body - by the irrational world, the irruption of the magic world into the established world. What affects the African Negro is not so much the appearance of an object as its profound reality, its 'surréalité'; not so much its form as its meaning...The sentient aspect, since it has been perceived in its peculiarities, is only the form of the essence of the object.28

Using an example from African daily life to illustrate the concept of "sur-reality", the Ghanian sociologist K. A. Busia explains:

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When the African offers an egg to a tree, or food to a dead ancestor, he is not expressing ignorance of material substances, or natural causes, but he is expressing in conduct a theory of reality; namely, that behind the visible substance of things lie essence, or powers which constitute their true nature.29

Perhaps a full understanding and appreciation of the concept of surreality as the Black African lives it is impossible for the mind of Western man to grasp. Shaped by Greco-Roman logic and rationalism, the mentality of Western man will probably find any attempt at direct identification and sur-realistic apprehension of invisible supernatural forces beyond its scope of perception. Yet, by means of the literary and folk contributions of these peoples, the man of Europe and America can to a limited degree listen to the strangely moving sounds and rhythms of this "new" world, behold its wonders of colors and odors, and penetrate the deep recesses of the African soul where he may come to recognize the source of strength of this indomitable race.

Cult Of The Dead

At the center of Dahomean social organization is the worship of the ancestors, often referred to as the cult of the dead. The reader should be reminded that the African family comprises the living and dead descendants of its founder who rules as an absolute monarch over the destiny of the living. In order to assure continued existence and

prosperity to the sib, the living members of the family must see to it that the worship of the dead is scrupulously carried out. One important task entailed in the worship of the ancestors is to conclude the funeral ceremonies for all dead adults within three years after their death so that their souls may not be lost to the sib. A second important obligation connected with this cult is to foster the timely deification of the family dead in the form of the construction of an ancestral shrine in the family compound' or collectivity.

Since death is viewed as the climax of life in the Dahomean culture, the ritual that surrounds the demise of an adult member of the family is a long and dramatic one. It is the bridge which connects the world of the living to that of the dead. Hence among the French-speaking peoples of Africa and the West Indies, the concept of death and the dead carry a heavier meaning and a more far reaching implication for the living members of the family than Americans usually attach to this phenomenon. One has only to observe the meticulous care showered upon the dying, the long and often costly funeral and period of mourning which follow, to realize the place of importance the dead hold in the life of the living in Afro-French cultures.

A full description of the death and burial ritual is not possible or applicable here. An enumeration of the several phases of the ceremony will suffice to give an idea of its duration and extensiveness. The first phase is the wailing and washing which begins immediately prior to the demise of
the person. Next comes the watch and the planning of the funeral. This phase is presided over by the head of the sib, usually the oldest living male. The third is the first or partial burial. It takes place from three to five days after death. The last phase is the final burial and the wake which follows. From ten to eleven days after death, the dead person is definitively buried. In the past the dead was actually exhumed and re-buried. Today, this is seldom done. This ceremony is performed using a dummy. Probably the most spectacular part of this phase of the burial ritual is the wake. Herskovits' description of this final wake is strikingly vivid.

The wake after the final burial is really a social occasion. Beginning in the evening, going throughout the night, and until an hour or two before dawn, there is drinking and dancing and singing. Tales are recounted dealing with themes of the broadest sexual innuendo, for the native view is that this is the time to amuse the dead, for to moralize to a dead person is both indecent and senseless.  

Among the peoples of the Caribbean, especially among the Haitians, the death and burial ritual differs at this point from its African prototype. Since there is only one burial the important wake is held the first night following death. In terms of what transpires during the wake, it follows very closely the African custom described above. What alterations there are, including the time the wake occurs in the burial ritual, may well reflect the influence of the Catholic Church and certain legal restrictions concerning death and burial.

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30 Herskovits, Dahomey, p. 195.
customs. The following description of the Haitian wake will serve to illustrate how it differs from that of the Dahomeans:

The wake which takes place on the night of death, is one of the most important ceremonies in the cycle of rites for the dead. Besides the singing of canticles, there are games...the recitation of humorous poems and folk tales, and the singing of a chanson de romance by the girls. All this is entered into with zest, for an important purpose in holding the wake is to amuse the dead, whose body lies nearby, and thus send him away in good humor. When drinks are passed the recipients make three libations before drinking, to the Trinity, others say to the loa, the dead and the Twins. The funeral is held in accordance with the rites of the Church. La derniere prière (of the Novena) is followed by great feasting - mangé mort.31

Worship of the dead is based on the belief that the dead are not lost to the living, that they are ever present in the Cosmos, that they are capable of aiding their living descendants materially, and that they sit in judgment on their behaviors. In a word, they are the interlocutors between the living and God, since He has given them certain powers which they may exercise in the world of the living. Among these powers, is the right to return to earth as ghosts. For the Haitians, there are several types of dead, but the two most often encountered in Haitian oral and written literature are the "viens-viens" or ordinary ghosts, and the "Zombi," the ghost of the soul that has been "sold" by a sorcerer, and because of this, has been doomed to wander over the earth until its appointed time to return to God.

Evidence of the Haitian's belief in continued existence after death is indicated by what is placed in the coffin with the

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dead. The customary items include a rosary, a scapular, a bar of soap, a comb, a handkerchief, face powder, and a pipe for the smoker. They are careful not to include any strong drink or money in the belief that if the spirit of the dead were to become drunk this would mean danger and the sight of money would lead it to return to earth and take the rest of the family wealth. In a like manner no food of any kind is placed in the coffin for fear that the spirit would be so busy eating that he would not recognize the road leading to the Great Above.

A knowledge of how Afro-French peoples look upon and respond to death and its aftermath is very necessary for the individual who undertakes to understand and interpret their world-view. For in it the dead play a major role of which the living take due cognizance in their daily activities. Failure to recognize this fact concerning Afro-French beliefs and practices would be to ignore a very potent force in African life and culture. Worship of the dead ancestors gives validity and strength to the control that the head of the family (the oldest living male) exercises over the family clan. It keeps in tact the traditional hierarchical relationship in the African family and establishes an unbroken line of social control from the youngest member to the founder of the sib even though he has been dead for many generations. The individual unaware of this could hardly grasp the deeper significance of the admonition that the Sengalese poet, Birago Diop gives in the following lines:
Listen more often to things rather than beings. 
Hear the fire's voice, 
Hear the voice of the water. 
In the wind hear the sobbing of the trees, 
It is our forefathers breathing. 

The dead are not gone forever.  


or

The words of Haitian, Jacques Roumain:

That is the long way to Guinea 
Death leads you there. 
There are the branches, trees, the forest. 

The hut of your fathers and the family stone 
On which your brow rests at last.

**Magic**

Among the peoples of West Africa, magic is not a phenomenon or practice unto itself. Like most aspects of African life, it is closely woven with certain religious rites and rituals. In those parts of French West Africa where professional workers of magic sell charms, the force that renders them effective is held to come from the God of the Earth, Legba, and certain lesser gods of the forest. Magic may work to bring either good or evil but only in specific cases. It may cause a man to love a particular woman, or a certain crop of a thankless neighbor not to yield a bountiful harvest. But its reach or "power" does not extend to the general neighborhood, or population.

Anthropologists explain that the West African belief

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in magic when transported to the Caribbean Islands by the slaves met with corresponding European beliefs and a slightly different concept originated. In this culture, magic is a system unto itself. It is not a part of the voudou cult. However, it is associated with some of the loa who are capable of working evil or good. This fact makes it rather difficult to draw a sharp distinction between the beneficial workers of magic and those who do evil. It depends upon the particular loa involved and whether it has been properly "respected" or vexed. On this point Herskovits writes:

The phenomenon (magic) dealt with love, and its not illogical contradictions, arise, however, from the fact that the realistic African world view has by no means given way to that separation of the categories of good and evil that governs much European thinking... In short, Haitian belief, of which magic forms a part, does not allow a world view drawn only in blacks and whites. All tones of gray are found, and these merge one unto another almost imperceptibly, as the fortunes of man wax and wane during his lifetime. 34

As will be seen in contemporary Haitian literature* charms of good and evil are clearly differentiated by their names. Benevolent charms are referred to as "arrêt, garde" or "droges"; while malevolent ones are called "wangas."

Hence the popular creole expressions, "Wanga, moun qui fait ça." (It is men who make Wangas.) The first group protects man against mental or physical harm. Therefore, for every "Wanga" or evil charm there is a "garde." Stories involving


*Especially in the "roman paysan" of Haiti.
the use of charms are very prevalent in works by many contemporary Caribbean writers.

The use of magic in Afro-French countries is a feature of the way of life of the peoples of these lands, just as the use of insecticides or immunization is an accepted feature of American life and culture. One has to understand and accept magic for what it is, no more or no less. It does not mean that people who practice using it are inherently evil, no more than those who practice betting on horse races are seasoned gamblers. Both are means by which men, throughout history, have attempted to assure unto themselves health, prosperity, and happiness.
Chapter III

African Music and Dance: Source of Afro-French Creative Expression

The low beating of the tom-toms
The slow beating of the tom-toms
Low....slow
Slow....low
Stirs your blood.

Langston Hughes

Traditional African creative expression is oral. It includes ancestral myths, charms, songs, prayers, tales, poetry, drama and dance. Often it is a fusion of the musical, the dramatic, the choreographic, and the visual. Like religion, music and dance are so much a part of African life that no activity or endeavor goes untouched by it. On the role of music and African life Cruz and Pollock write:

The African is born with music, lives with it, and dies with it. As soon as the child learns to walk he learns to dance, adapting himself to the language of music long before he can express thoughts and emotion in words.¹

Principally African music and dance is the collective expression of the folk. It represents the creative genius of a people, a village, a tribe or a "dokpwe" - a group of male laborers. It is one of the forces that undergird African

communal life and gives to it its cohesion and buoyant quality. In his short history of the former French states of West Africa, John D. Hargreaves says that rhythmic music and dance have for many centuries been integral parts of African social activity, associated with work and worship, recreation and war. 2

In his effort to interpret and respond to the challenge that life presents him, the African, like other races of men, turned to sources within himself as well as outside of himself. His music and dance, embracing both the sacred and secular in his life, are the embodiment of his struggle for survival, the success of his achievements, the celebration of his loves, and the aspiration of his hopes and dreams. Because music and dance hold so central a place in African life, any attempt to study Afro-French literature and culture should include at some point a discussion of these two art forms as they relate to the literary and oral creative tradition among African peoples and their descendants.

The Song in African Culture

African music is of two types: vocal and instrumental. Among Africans, songs have been used for a long time as repositories of history. By means of song, great legends of the past were preserved and transmitted to succeeding generations as well as a compendium of proverbs and words

of wisdom touching on all phases of life. Thus it is not infrequent that one studying Afro-French literary contributions will find whole stanzas of folk songs interspersed throughout a narrative, novel or play. These musical interludes may recount an event of the past, pronounce a warning, or supply a gem of "la sagesse folklorique" in the form of a proverbial refrain. More than mere techniques of the author to add variety to his work, the inclusion of stanzas of songs, or refrains in literary works is a page from African folk tradition which is a communal tradition involving an entire collectivity or tribe.

Unlike European vocal music, the songs of Africa, especially of West Africa, are largely the responsorial type. There is usually a "leader" who sings the "narrative" and his audience responds with a choral refrain. Many American Negro spirituals are based on this responsorial pattern. Singing is almost always accompanied by some type of musical instrument. According to the French musicologist, Stephen Chauvet:

On peut rencontrer, en Afrique, des indigènes qui exécutent de la musique seule, sans l'accompagner de chants; et vice versa comme aussi vice versa, des chants sans les accompagner de musique. Mais, dans l'immense majorité des cas musique et chants vont ensemble, et même, très souvent, musique et chants sont accompagnées de danses.³

(In Africa one can meet natives who make music without the accompaniment of singing, and also the reverse, that is who sing without any instrumental accompaniment. But in the great

majority of cases, music and song go together, and even very often music and song are accompanied by dancing.

In African communal or group singing, the leader is not necessarily a "soloist" in the American sense of that term, but an expert at manipulating in a full, strong voice the often long and intricate vocal passages common to native songs. As a chronicle and communicator the leader is at the same time a composer and a performer. Therefore, he is usually held in high esteem among his tribesmen. Often he is a witchdoctor or a medicine man whose herbs and magical incantations are employed to ward off evil spirits, to sustain the warriors in battle, to bring rain during a dry season, and to please the ancestors. The role of this African personality is aptly described by the South African scholar, Ezekiel Mphalele, as follows:

...inasmuch as the witchdoctor in traditional African society is not a mere dealer in charms and portions, but is the moral conscience of his people. It is to him that the people appeal when they want to know what to do that they do not offend the community and thereby the spirits of the ancestors. 4

Rhythm, Dance, and Musical Instruments

The most popular feature of African music is, no doubt, its rhythm, especially that of the drums. As was stated in an earlier chapter, African life is one of movement, sound, touch, and smell. Rhythm, therefore, is basic to existence in African culture. The four principal sources of rhythm

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are the drumbeats, the accents of the singers, the movement of the drummers and dancers, the clapping of the hands and stomping of the foot. In his explanation of the importance of rhythm to the Black African, René Maran states:

All are prey to that rhythm, that sacred frenzy which are two of the forces of the colored races, and more especially of the Negro. This rhythm, this frenzy, lend to their sarcasm, to their sadness, humor, accusations, vindications, blasphemy, to their feverish outbursts, to the dances and songs of tom-tom and balafon which impregnate everything with their sonorous light, a beauty of incantation and magic, that is not yet all of Africa, but which already is Africa.

Much of the counsel proffered to the tribe by the witch-doctor is done through song accompanied by dance. Dance is, perhaps, as old as African civilization itself and permeates all phases and levels of life. The inseparable link between African civilization and the dance is described in the following words:

One cannot speak of Negro music without mentioning the dances that it inspires, so inseparable and to some extent consubstantial are they. Everything is a pretext for dancing in Africa. There are ritual dances, tribal dances, war dances. There are also dances proper to each animal, to each element, to all that lives, to all that dies. The sound of their instruments—balafons and tom-toms—provides the voice they need to go into a trance. Tragedies, comedies, tragic-comedies, these dances are all that

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*A type of zylophone.

6 René Maran, "Contributions of The Black Race to European Art," Crisis (May, 1949), 143.
successively or simultaneously.  

The musical instruments so often encountered in Afro-French literature and culture are as indigenous to African civilization as is the dance. They form one with the literary and aesthetic creativity of Africans. Many of the Afro-French poets name the particular musical instrument to be played during the reading of certain of their poetic selections. An example of this is Senghor's collection, Chants pour Nàëtt. In his poem "Rappel", Leon G. Damas employs a bamboo whistle to recall memories of his past, almost overshadowed by French influences. Sometimes the musical instrument may symbolize an idea or an historical event, or a social change as seen in Jean-Joseph Rabé arivelos poem "Flute Players."

The musical instrument most closely associated with Africa and, of course, with Afro-French literary and aesthetic contributions is the drum, often called "tom-tom." There are drums of varying size and for use on different occasions. There are drums that serve only as drums for war, communication, and for sacred ceremonies. Berrian describes African drums as follows:

Drums are used for three purposes: dancing, signaling, and speech. The talking drum does not use a kind of Morse system as imagined by most non-Africans. Taking the Yoruba people of Nigeria as a case in point, the Talking drum they use (Dundun" or hour-glass) is perfectly suited to represent the Yoruba language, even to the point

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7 Ibid., p. 142.
of producing its tones and glides.  

A drum may bear a different appellation in different tribes. For example, the very tall, cylindrical drum is called "ngoma" by some tribes and "nagalabi" by others. Some bear names that refer to animals, such as "Lukembyé" or "Koy na Bala" which translates as "the village leopard." Africans make use also of many different types of bells, referred to as "gongs" or "grelets." These include instruments as simple as the common small bell with a single clapper to the "m'bichi", a portable marimba, and the balafon, a zylophone of sorts. There are also whistles, flutes and a variety of stringed instruments. Chauvet distinguishes among this plethora of instruments thus:

Of, le tam-tam, ce n'est pas de la musique; ce n'est que l'accompagnement de la danse; et les joueurs de tambours, comme les sonneurs de d'olifant, ne sont pas plus considérés, en Afrique, comme des musiciens, que ne le sont, en Europe, les sonneurs de tambours qui accompagnent une troupe en marche. Les véritables instruments de musique, ce sont; les m'bichi, les zyophones, les flutes, les harpes, les lyres, les mandolines, les guitars multibranches, les citéhres.

(However the tom-tom, is not music; it is only the accompaniment for the dance; and drummers like buglers are no more considered as musicians in Africa than are buglers and drummers

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9 Stephen Chauvet, Musique Nègre, p. 13.
10 Ibid., p. 13.
who accompany a marching band in Europe. The veritable musical instruments are the "m'bichi", zylophone, flute, harp, lyre, mandoline, the many stringed guitar, and the cithara.) Some of the stringed instruments most often encountered in Afro-French literature and culture are: the Kora, a sixteen string harp, popular in Senegal; the "arc sonore" or musical bow used as accompaniment for individual singing; the "Lo-Kanga", a type of violin with a single string, popular in Madagascar; the "ombi" or "Mandoline cithare", a stringed instrument used to accompany singing.

Music of The French West Indies

Except for the drum and the gourd (le calebasse), it seems that many of the other musical instruments familiar in the Mother Country were lost to the French-speaking African population of the Caribbean Islands. To be sure, over the years, these peoples have invented others to fill this void, such as the musical hoe and the kerosene tin utilized in certain sacred dances. Where available, instruments of the Western World are also used. The drum was probably the first musical instrument utilized in the Caribbean by the African slaves as accompaniment for the sacred dances that constitute an important part of the voudou ceremonial rites and as sources of rhythm for "social" dancing. Following the African tradition, the slaves invented certain drums to be used only at sacred rites and others designed for secular occasions. The sacred drums, in sets of three, bear the names of the three principal voudou rites: Rada, Congo, and
Petro. They are never played except at religious ceremonies. Prior to being used in any religious rites these drums are consecrated in special ceremonies presided over by the Houngan, the "high" priest of the voudou cult. Herskovits describes musical instruments used as accompaniment to the voudou dance as follows:

Drums, iron, and rattles are indispensable for a voudou dance. The drums, the characteristic hollow log African type, tuned with pegs inserted in the sides and reinforced with twine wound about the stretched heads of cowhide or goat-skin, are played in batteries of three—the largest being called the "bula." Each has been baptized. The iron or "ogan," usually consists of the blade of a hoe struck by a large spike, and the rattle, acon—a rounded calabash, containing seeds or pebbles. The iron and the rattles set the basic, steady beat about which the complex drum rhythms play.

The rhythm of each drum is distinctive because there is a special rhythm for calling each one of the loa, and each devotee readily recognizes the rhythm of his loa. The "maman" drum is the most important in the ritual dance because it dictates the various movements of the dancers. The dancers dance facing the drums since it is in their rhythm that the voice of the gods is heard.

As in Africa, the dance in the French-speaking societies of the Caribbean holds a very important place in communal life, especially as it relates to religious rites. Speaking on this point Jacques Roumain affirms that "la religion est intimement associé au chant, à la danse, à la musique (religion

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is intimately associated with song, dance, and music.)

The voudou dance, referred to as a "bamboche", is also a social occasion. Its attraction is strong and usually the attendance is heavy giving the appearance of an overcrowded undisciplined frolic. But Herskovits points out that it should be explained that this form of worship of the loa is neither unrestrained hysteria nor drunken orgiastic satisfaction of the sex drive. The behavior of the participants, in terms of the accepted patterns of European and American religious decorum, often seems uncouth, vigorous, violent, and even dangerous. One should be reminded that he is observing the tradition of a people whose civilization and culture are different and should be judged by standards applicable to them.

Vocal music in the French West Indies has been influenced by European and American music but not to the point that all African characteristics have been lost. To the contrary, the type of folk singing encountered in the Caribbean follows the responsorial pattern as in West Africa. Probably the best examples of this type of vocal music are the "combite" or work songs. A "combite" is an African "dokwe" transported to the New World. It is a type of communal work crew—composed of neighbors, relatives, and friends—that operates on a mutual exchange basis for the purpose of doing farm work. The workers are not paid but are treated to a sumptuous feast and plenty of "clairin", a popular cheap rum. Music and singing

are as characteristic of the combite as food and drink.

This type of music and organized cooperative work system is vividly described in the following passage:

The scene in a field where a large combite is at work is an arresting one. The men form a line, with a drummer in front of their hoes. The 'simidor' who leads the singing as he works with the others adds the rhythm of his song to the regular beats of the drum, thus setting the time for the strokes of the implements wielded by the workers. This drum slung about the neck of the drummer, is of the European form, never the hollowed - out African type that figures in religious rites. "Lambi' or conch-shell horns are also used as musical instruments. ...During the periods of rest, re-alignments are made and, after a short time...the cry of the simidor rings out, the initial statement of a song is sounded, and as the chorus swings into the melody, the hoes rise again, the beat of the drums is begun, the plaintive notes of the lambi are heard, and the workers once more move down the field.\(^{14}\)

The combite is both work and recreation. It serves to supply the participants with the latest in news and gossip and also to comment on the shortcoming of neighbors, certain political figures, community scandals and the like. For these events and others of a non-religious nature, the secular drums are used. In Haiti these bear the names of "baca," "maringoin, rabordage", and "vaccines." The combite like the music and singing that characterize it is a communal activity, one that expresses the collective creative genius of the folk. This collective creative spirit is manifest in the life and literature of the French-speaking Caribbean, especially in folk tales and the "roman paysan" which treats peasant life and customs.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 71.
CHAPTER IV

MYTHS IN AFRO-FRENCH LIFE AND CULTURE

Masks, 0 masks

... ... ...
Fix your cold gaze on your children who command it.

Leopold S. Senghor

Definition and Characterization

Every people bound together by certain communal bonds—religion, language, geography—has its collection of myths. They underlie most, if not all, of human creativity. It is by way of myths that man evolves from momentary experiences to enduring conceptions of cosmological reality. He lives not with the objects that compose his environment, but with their forms. Myth making, since it is a type of mental "conditioning", enables man not only to make contact with his environment, but to fuse with it and it with him, thus establishing a type of communion.

What is a myth? One dictionary defines a myth as "a story, the origin of which is forgotten, ostensibly historical but usually such as to explain some practice, belief, institution or natural phenomenon."\(^1\) In literary terminology,


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the myth is often described as "fictionalized history, barren of any historical content." From the point of view of language, Cassirer states that "mythology, in the highest sense, is the power exercised by language on thought in every possible sphere of mental activity." As it relates to African civilization, Thomas states that the myth "constitutes the existential experience of the African at odds with himself and the world." He ascribes to the African myth the following characteristics:

1. Most of the time, it takes on a sacred and immutable character.

2. It is voluntarily hermetic and dates back to something which transcends it.

3. It is revelatory and often aims at profound efficacy by means of the magic power of the word.

4. In its traditional form, it is esoteric; only the 'initiated' can grasp all of its savour, its fullest import.

5. Its imaginative structure proceeds from the active imagination and not from the imaginary.

6. Belief in it is solid.

7. It is usually closely associated with religious rites and beliefs.

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4 Thomas, "Time, Myth and History in West Africa," 64.

5 Ibid., 66.
The Black African's religious and psychological orientation combine to form the great synthesis needed for the creation and perpetuation of the mythico-religious consciousness which gives to his myths their truths and continuity. Accommodating themselves to geographic, economic, and demographic exigencies, the African seeks to account for temporal duration and historical relevance by a mechanism expressive of his orientation and mentality, a plurality of myths. In an attempt to facilitate an understanding of this plurality of myths, Thomas divides them into two major categories: (1) cosmological, if they treat the origin of the world or of men; and (2) etiological, if they propose to explain a precise fact. He further explains this division in the following words:

Fundamentally, and in general, the myth can be apprehended in two ways: according to whether one examines its content, meaning the theme it pretends to illustrate or develop - and next, its form, or the way in which it presents itself. In the first alternative, myths will be treated,... as myths of origin, eschatological myths and ontological myths. The second alternative will deal with the mythtale which, by way of the interpreter, narrates a story, the conceptual myth which reposes uniquely on a peremptory theme, the visual myth which utilizes a concrete image or a play of images, and finally, the personal myth which idealizes a portrait and culminates in the cult of hero-worship.6

Afro-French literary contributions are replete with examples of these types and themes common to the myth as described above. Therefore, the non-African must be lead

to realize and understand that these examples are not to be taken as mere allegories. To the contrary, they are the embodiment of profound reality.

In his attempt to grasp the deeper meaning of the myth in African life and culture, the non-African should begin by understanding that traditional, black African cosmology conceives of the universe as unfinished, which may be taken to mean either of the following: (1) that the present universe will disappear and a new world will emerge; or (2) that new-born souls will unite with reincarnated souls and together they will renew the face of the earth. Space and time are believed to be infinite, stretching from heaven to earth and incapable of being measured by man-made instruments. Through the mirror of the myth, all time leads to Great Time or Eternity. Time is believed to antedate history, and space extends from heaven to the four corners of the horizon. Therefore, the hardiest of tribesmen could never venture beyond the limits of the horizon. Instead of speaking in artificial time-measurement terminology, the African embraces the natural division of time and identifies with these. In the folktale, "'N'Gor-Niébé," the narrator describes the distance and length of time that the main character walked thus:

Il avait marché nuit et jour, il avait

7 Ibid., p. 58.
marché des lunes et des lunes, il avait traversé le pays des markas, des bambaras, etc. 9

(He had walked night and day, he had walked for many moons (months), he had crossed the country of the Markas (tribe), the territory of the Bambaras, etc.). Here, time and space form a type of continuum. Distance traveled is expressed in terms of natural time intervals, and these in turn convey the amount of space covered. The following passage illustrates just how this time-space co-ordinate works in a social setting:

The story-teller, custodian of magic will say:

Once upon a time there was ...
and his listeners will answer in chorus:
'There was in fact at that time...' The story-teller resumes in order to place that time and says: 'Men and beasts gathered together in the evening to exchange views, on the way of looking at the world.' 10

Diakhate sums up the relationship of time and space in African mythology in these words:

Time and space are therefore two elements which one does not attempt to define. One feels them; rather, one lives-them. 11

Some Popular African Myths

The numerous myths in Afro-French literature and culture cover a broad spectrum in variety and significance. But it is neither possible nor necessary to discuss all of them

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11 Ibid., p. 17.
here. A brief look at a few of those that are frequently encountered in Afro-French creative expression will be sufficient to demonstrate their use and importance. Below is the well-known myth of the Baoulé tribe.

La Légende Baoulé

Il y a longtemps, très longtemps, vivait au bord d'une lagune calme, une tribu paisible de nos frères. Ses jeunes hommes étaient nombreux, nobles et courageux, ses femmes étaient belles et joyeuses. Et leur reine, la reine Pokou, était la plus belle parmi les plus belles.

Depuis longtemps, très longtemps, la paix était sur eux et les esclaves mêmes, fils de captifs des temps révolus, étaient heureux auprès de leurs heureux maîtres.

Un jour, les ennemis vinrent nombreux comme des magnans. Il fallut quitter les paillettes, les plantations, la lagune poissonneuse, laisser les filets, tout abandonner pour fuir.

Ils partirent dans la forêt. Ils laissèrent aux épines leurs pagnes, puis leur chair. Il fallait fuir toujours, sans repos, sans trêve, talonné par l'ennemi féroce.

Et leur reine, la reine Pokou, marchait la dernière, portant au dos son enfant.

À leur passage l'hyène ricanait, l'éléphant et sanglier le fuyaient, le chimpanzé grognait et le lion étonné s'écartait du chemin.

Enfin, les broussailles apparurent, puis la savane et les rôniers et, encore une fois, la horde entonna son chant d'exil:

Mi houn Ano, Mi houn Ano, bla ô
Ebolo nigue, mo ba gnan min -
Mon mari Ano, mon mari Ano, viens
Les génies de la brousse m'emportent.

Harassés, exténués, amaigris, ils arrivèrent sur le soir au bord d'un grand fleuve dont le cours se brisait sur d'énormes rochers.

Et le fleuve mugissait, les flots montaient jusqu'aux cimes des arbres et retombaient et les fugitifs étaient glacés d'effroi.

Consternés, ils se regardaient. Était-ce là l'Eau qui les faisait vivre naguère, l'Eau, leur grande amie? Il avait fallu qu'un mauvais génie l'excitât contre eux.
Et les conquérants devenaient plus proches.
Et pour la première fois, le sorcier parla:
"L'eau est devenue mauvaise, dit-il, et elle ne
s'apaisera que quand nous lui aurons donné ce que nous
avons de plus cher."
Et le chant d'espoir retentit:

Ebe nin flè nin bâ Quelqu'un appelle son fils
Ebe nin flè nin nan Quelqu'un appelle sa mère
Ebe nin flè nin dja Quelqu'un appelle son père
Yapensé ni djà wali Les belles filles se
marient

Et chacun donna ses bracelets d'or et d'ivoire,
et tout ce qu'il avait pu sauver.
Mais le sorcier les repoussa du pied et montra le
jeune prince, le bébé de six mois: "Voilà, dit-il,
ce que nous avons de plus précieux":
Et la mère, effrayée, serra son enfant sur son
coeur. Mais la mère était aussi reine, et droite
au bord de l'abîme, elle leva son enfant souriant
au-dessus de sa tête et le lança dans l'eau mugissante.
Alors des hippopotames émergèrent et se plaçant
les uns à la suite des autres, formèrent un pont et
sur ce pont miraculeux, le peuple en fuite passa en
chantant:

Ebe nin flè nin bâ Quelqu'un appelle son fils
Ebe nin flè nin nan Quelqu'un appelle sa mère
Ebe nin flè nin dja Quelqu'un son père
Yapensé ni djà wali Les belles filles se marient

Et la reine Pokou passa la dernière et trouva
sur la rive son peuple prosterné.
Mais la reine était aussi mère et elle put dire
seulement "baoulé," ce qui veut dire: l'enfant est mort.
Et c'était que la reine Pokou et le peuple garda
le nom de Baoulé.

The indéstrucibility of the Baoulé tribe is believed to rest
on this simple but touching myth tale. Similarly, the origin
of many of the phenomena in Nature are accounted for in the
myth tale. An example of such a tale is "L'Eclipse de la
lune" written by J. Seid Brahim of the Republic of Chad.12

12 The complete text is given in Appendix E.
A sentient being, the African penetrates nature through its constituent elements. In this way, water, fire, wind, earth form one continuous kaleidoscope of objects, colors, and sounds that interest and absorb one another as in the words of Birago Diop:

Listen more often
To Things than to Beings
The Fire's Voice can be heard
Hear the Voice of the Water
Listen in the Wind
To the Bush sobbing...*

There is also the myth of the Night, one of the most popular of African myths. Night is shrouded in mystery. Under its cloak, man enters into the real world and holds dialogue with the spirits. Therefore, Night is, at one and the same time, evocation and incantation, serenity and anguish, concealment and revelation, friend and foe. The Senegalese poet, Leopold S. Senghor, significantly have for two of his volumes of poems the titles, *Chants d'Ombre* (Songs of Darkness) and *Nocturnes*.

Ranking with Night in prevalence is the myth of Blood in African culture. Diakhate describes the importance of this myth in the following words:

Blood: here I have pronounced one of the main terms of reference in African Negro mythology. In matriarchial societies a man takes his mother's blood. *Blood* is therefore a distinguishing mark, making clear the line of descent. It is a boundary and a rallying point. More than this, blood implies witness. Traditionally it must not be defiled, but respected and protected. Blood recalls virtues and reinforces the African Negro's bravery and his

*Diop, "Forefathers, 1-6."
will to triumph over an obstacle.  

Thus Senghor could announce in one of his poems:

....My task is to reconquer the farthest pearls of your blood in the very depths of the icy oceans.  

Another important feature of African mythology is that of the consanguinity of animals and people. The world of Africa is a veritable stage upon which men and animals meet in dialogue. The famous animal stories of Birago Diop, of Senegal, of Philippe Toby Marcelin and Pierre Marcelin of Haiti are examples of the luminous world of men and beasts. Moreover, beasts of the brush are extolled for certain qualities that they are held to embody. For example, the Lion embodies patience, bravery and fair-play, while the snake embodies healing power.

The examples of African mythology presented above should suffice to introduce the reader to the idea of the existence of the myths in Afro-French creative expression. It is via the myth that the magical is born. By means of language the African preserves and translates this sublimation of forces and objects into everyday reality. Hence the word as it were, becomes all important because the potency of the force or object is contained in its appellation. So to the African mentality name and essence are essentially one. According to Cassirer, "that is one of the fundamental

13 Ibid., p. 28.  
14 Leopold S. Senghor, Chants d'Ombre, p. 66.
assumptions of the mythmaking consciousness itself." In this respect, traditional Africans do not differ from other peoples and cultures of the World.

Today, under the impact of modern technology, expanded educational opportunities, improved means of transportation, and communication, traditional African life is rapidly being changed. Likewise the place of the myth in African life is also undergoing change and modification. While some contemporary writers still draw upon the traditional myths in African culture for the source of their works, others have replaced the popular mythtale by a conceptual myth in which a definite theme is propounded or by a visual myth in which an image or object is extolled. In some of their writings they venerate certain of their confrères who figured prominently in bringing about political and social reforms in Africa. An example of this type of personage myth is Aimé Césaire's play, Une Saison au Congo, which eulogies Patrice Lumumba. Moreover, the visual myth ascribes an exhalted value to physical appearance - color, size, shape. The black color of one's skin has an intrinsic worth for him who is endowed with it. It is also the label of solidarity among all men of African heritage, and the badge of admittance to the society of Blacks. It is the visual myth that underlies the concept of

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négritude, "a certain attitude toward the world." Of the modern African myth which enables the African to take pride in his physical features, Leopold S. Senghor has said:

Its only truth resides in its efficacity: if it helps some Negro people shed their more or less dissimulated feeling of inferiority vis-à-vis the white man, it is not useless. It is more a means of action than anthropological truth.16

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CHAPTER V

NEGRITUDE: ITS DEVELOPMENT AND MEANING IN AFRO-FRENCH LITERATURE AND CULTURE

For the dim region whence my fathers came,
My spirit, bondaged by the body, longs.

Claude McKay

Basic to the study and teaching of Afro-French literature and culture is an understanding of the concept of Négritude. Representing more than a dozen countries stretching from the Mainland of Africa to French Guiana, the West Indies, and Madagascar, contemporary Afro-French literary creativity is unified as much by the concept of Négritude as by the French language. It is this concept that gives to this body of literature its ethnic character and international dimension.

Definition and Characterization

The term "Negritude" first appeared in print in 1932 in a magazine called L'Étudiant, founded by Léopold Sédar Senghor, from Senegal, and Aimé Césaire, from Martinique.1 Both were students in Paris at the time. However, it was the French philosopher and intellectual, Jean-Paul Sartre who

first put down in writing the meaning of the word. In "Orphée Noir", the preface to Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie Nègre et Malgache*, Sartre formulates or verbalizes the psychological, emotional, and ethnic consciousness which the term "Nègritude" embodies when he says:

> L'unité finale qui rapproche tous les opprimés dans le même combat doit être précédées aux colonies par ce que je nommerai le moment de la séparation ou de la néhativité. Ce racisme antiraciste est le seul chemin qui puisse mener à l'abolition des différences de race.

> ...aussi la conscience de race est-elle d'abord axés sur certaine qualité commune aux pensées et aux conduites des nègres et que l'on nomme la 'négritude.'

(The final unity that will bring together all oppressed peoples in the same struggle must be preceded by groupings which I shall call the moment of separation or of negativity. Antiracist racism is the only road that can lead to the abolition of racial differences....moreover, racial consciousness is centered first on the black soul or rather... on a certain quality common in the thoughts and behavior of Negroes and which is called "Negritude.")

In describing negritude as "la prise de conscience", Sartre writes:

> Le nègre...est victime de la structure capitaliste de notre société; cette situation lui dévoile son étroite solidarité...Et puisqu'il lui faut prendre conscience.

(The Negro...is victim of the capitalistic structure of our society; this situation unveils to him his close solidarity... and since he is oppressed because of his race, it is from}
within his race that he must draw awareness.) In other words, Negritude exists to destroy itself. Like fire, it is destined to consume what gives it life. This has to obtain in order that negative racism may be eradicated from Western civilization. So like Orpheus descending to claim Eurydice, the Black Man descends into himself, his consciousness, his African heritage in search of substance and sustenance with which he employs to reaffirm his selfhood and his humanness.

In addition to Sartre's brilliant and perceptive characterization of Negritude, the teacher who is interested in obtaining a broad understanding of this concept as it manifests itself in the literary works of French-speaking Blacks would examine other scholars' views on Negritude as well. Senghor defines Negritude as "la patrimoine cultural, less valeurs et surtout l'esprit de la civilsation négro-africaine (the cultural inheritance, values and especially the soul of Negro-African civilization)." His definition is deeply rooted in that civilization that endured the old Mali Empire and which assimilated Islam and Christianity but still retained inviolate its great traditions. He believes that Negritude in poetry resides more in the style than in themes. It is that special manner in which the poet gives expression to his impulses and emotions. For Aimé


Césaire, negritude is an attitude toward life. It is an awareness of being black in a white world. Negritude embraces color, race, psychology, and the act of reclaiming. It is an active and vibrant concept whose objective is to break through the barriers that enslave the mind and soul of Blacks through the practice of alienation and rejection. Unlike that of Senghor, the spirit of Césaire's negritude is one of revolt and liberation as expressed in the following poem:

Ma négritude n'est pas une pierre
sa surdité ruée contre la clameur du jour.
Ma négritude n'est pas une taie d'eau
morté sur l'oeil mort de la terre
Ma négritude n'est ni une tour ni une
Cathédrale
Elle plonge dans la chair rouge du sol
Elle plonge dans la chair ardente du ciel
Elle trouve l'accablement opaque de sa droit
patience.⁴

(My negritude is not a rock, its deafness hurled against the clamor of the day. My negritude is not a film of dead water on the dead eye of the earth. My negritude is neither a tower nor a cathedral. It plunges into the red flesh of the earth. It plunges into the burning flesh of the sky. It pierces the opaque prostration with its upright patience.)

Of negritude, the American Negro and French teacher, W. A. Jeanpierre says:

Negritude emerged from a way of life - Western Colonialism - which is the very anti-thesis of what it symbolizes. To this way of life which denied any meaningful existence, to the distorted images of Africa fostered by it, the Negritude poet responds by setting the record straight, and

combatting prejudices institutionalized within the culture which oppresses him...it represents for the Negro African the completion of a tortuous cycle, culminating in the rediscovery of self. Casting aside the unfavorable vision of himself that he once accepted, the Negritudist accedes to the essence of his Africanitude, accenting and extolling blackness, both physically and spiritually.5

Inasmuch as it seeks to exteriorize the collective struggle of black peoples throughout the world, negritude is sometimes referred to as "le culte du noir", the cult of blackness. This emphasis on blackness expressed by the younger generation is captured in these words of the American poet, Langston Hughes:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter... If colored people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either.6

In "Orphée Noir", Jean-Paul Sartre recognizes the Black Man's reaffirmation of pride in his blackness. Sartre writes:

Le nègre ne peut nier qu'il soit Nègre ni reclamer pour lui cette abstraite humanité incolore; il est noir. Ainsi est-il acculé à l'authenticité: insulté, asservi, il se redresse, il ramasse le mot de 'nègre' qu'on lui a jeté comme une pierre, il se revendique comme noir, en face du blanc, dans la fierté.7

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7 Senghors, Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre, p. 11.
(The Negro can neither deny that he is black nor claim for himself that abstract, colorless humanity: he is black. Thus he is forced to accept its authenticity: humiliated, enslaved, he stands up, picks up the word "black man" that has been thrown him like a stone, [and] reaffirms his blackness before the white man with pride.)

An excellent manifestation of "le cult du noir" is expressed in the poem, "African Heaven" by Francis Ernest Kobins Parkes of the Republic of Ghana who says:

Give me black souls,
Let them be black
Or chocolate brown
Or make them the
Color of dust —
Dustlike,
Brownest than sand.
But if you can
Please, keep them black,
Black.*

The reaffirmation of color and race pride gives to contemporary literature by Blacks its international dimension. Bearing different labels in different cultures, its sources and themes are much the same. They grow out of the physical, political, and social alienation, exploitation colonialism in Africa, Madagascar, French Guiana, and the West Indies; and slavery and segregation (de jure and de facto) in the United States. Though, at times, separated by language, Blacks realized that they were bound together by color, heritage and economical, physical, and social circumstances.

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Out of this realization a feeling of kinship evolved which they voiced in all forms of creative expression—art, music, drama and literature. Therefore, in dance, Pearl Primus, the celebrated black dancer, could write:

Again and again I stand in awe above the plunging rapids of the mighty river Congo or kneel before the Oni of Ife to receive my name, Omowale, child returned home.⁹

And the Haitian poet, Jean F. Brière could say in his poem "Me Revoici Harlem":

When you bleed, Harlem, my handkerchief turns crimson.
When you weep, your lament is prolonged in my song.
With the same fervor, and through the same dark night,
Black brother, both of us dream the same dream.

Senghor could say in his poem "To the American Negro Troops":

Behind your strong face, I did not recognize you.
Yet I had only to touch the warmth of your dark hand my name is Africa!
And I discovered lost laughter again, and heard old voices, and the roaring rapids of the Congo.

... ... ...
Oh, black brothers, warriors whose mouths are singing flowers---
You I salute as messengers of peace.

Origin and Development

It is virtually impossible to point to the one event that gave rise to the concept of negritude among Blacks in

French-speaking countries, "the African Personality" as it is called in those African countries under British control and in South Africa, and the "Negro Renaissance" and later "Soul" in the United States. It would be more accurate to state that "black awareness" is a product of several events or movements of the Twentieth Century that had both national and international impact on Blacks and Whites - Europeans, Africans, and West Indians and Americans.

Obviously a guide to the teaching of Afro-French literature and culture cannot treat in full all of the historical events believed to be, in some way, responsible for the reawakening of Black peoples and their rejection of Western civilization and values for those that are African. Nevertheless, a brief description of several of the more significant ones will facilitate the understanding and appreciation of the literary and folk contributions of this generation of Afro-French writers.

The Senegalese scholar, S. Okechukwu Mézu, states that the cultural renaissance among Black peoples began in 1906 following the Niagara Falls Conference which led to the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the United States. Mézu says of the NAACP:

> Ce groupe, surtout par l'intermédiaire de sa revue, the Crisis (1909), va influencer le mouvement de la renaissance culturelle de l'homme noir.12

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(This group, especially via its publication, *The Crisis*, 1909, is going to influence the cultural reawakening of the Black man.)

René Maran of Martinique sees the Pan-African Congress of 1921 as the beginning of the Black Renaissance. He asserts:

Rare indeed are the intellectuals who today recall the excitement aroused in colonized countries by the famous Pan-African Congress that met in Paris in 1921, when the Negroes, after noting the universal poverty in which their race was still vegetating opined that before seeking any outside aid, colored people must first aid themselves. Those eddies were the starting point of the tidal wave of this black humanism whose first effects are now being recorded.

He could have well added to this statement the publication of his novel *Batouala*, the same year, and whose preface, as well as the novel itself, provoked a veritable storm of mixed emotions in Paris because of the scathing attack it made on France's treatment of its African colonials.

Four other events should be mentioned as contributors to race pride and identification with Africa. The first event was World War I, 1914-1917. For the first time thousands of American Blacks and Africans set foot on European soil. Besides getting a different idea about Europe and its brand of "civilization", the Blacks arrived at a new realization about themselves and their heritage as a people. René Maran voiced this realization in the

following words:

When will one realize that the black world began to bestir itself just after the World War and has not ceased, since then, becoming conscious of itself and of its profound value? The scope of this movement is increasing. The Black world feels that its hour is approaching. It also feels that it bears secrets the import of which Europe will not at first recognize.  

In July 1915, the United States sent two companies of marines and three of navy men into the harbor of Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. The U. S. Navy Department, in a statement of policy, proclaimed to the Haitian people that the single purpose of the occupation was to insure Haitian independence and to aid the Haitian people in establishing a stable government, and that the troops would remain in Haiti only so long as they were needed. The occupation lasted fifteen years.

The presence of American troops in Haiti came as a shock to many of the Haitians. Despite the proclamation declaring the peaceful intent of the United States, there existed among the people a strong feeling of suspicion, distrust, fear, and unrest. The presence of foreign troops was considered as a threat to their freedom which they had valiantly wrestled from the French in 1804. It recalled for them their bitter past—slavery, oppression, exploitation, hypocrisy, and General le Clerc and the French Fleet in the harbor of Cape Haitian. This threat to freedom

14 Ibid., 143.
forced the Haitian to seek solace from within his own country and from his own people, his own heritage as support for facing a precarious and delicate future. Two Haitian authors give a verbal picture of this invasion in the following passage:

1915 L'occupation Américaine vint s'installer brutalement chez nous. Ce fut le choc de deux pensées, de deux conceptions de la vie. Le sentiment national explosa. Ce fut la création de Ligues, de Comité de l'Union Patriotique, de Sociétés d'Histoire et de Géographie, pour contrecarrer l'action américaine et répandre le goût des études historiques. La prise de conscience de l'homme haitien l'obliges... à rechercher dans son passe, dans ses hérédités, dans son milieu, une profession de foi.

(1915 The American occupation came to install itself forcibly in the midst of us. It was the collision of two [ways] of thinking, of two conceptions of life. National sentiment exploded. Leagues, committees on patriotic union, historical and geographic societies were created to oppose American activity and to spread the taste for historical studies. The surge of Haitian consciousness forced him...to search in his past, in his inheritance, in his environment for a declaration of faith.)

The third event of notoriety was the Back to Africa Movement led by Marcus Garvey, which reached its zenith during the 1920's. Garvey was born in Jamaica, British West Indies but lived most of his life in New York City's

Harlem. It was the headquarters for his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Though his movement was a miserable failure and he finally returned to his native Jamaica a broken and disillusioned man, black consciousness increased as Birgit Aron points out:

Small Garveyite groups (in New York largely consisting of West Indians) continued to exist under such misleading impressive names as: The Ethiopian World Federation, the League for the Freedom of Darker Peoples and all Oppressed Peoples in Africa and All Those of African Descent Everywhere in the World, and The African Progressive Business League, to name a few of the prominent ones.

The nationalistic and racial exploration begun earlier in Haiti were reinforced by the preachments and activities of Garveyites. This quest for black identity spreading from Haiti to other peoples of the West Indies, and finally to French West Africa became crystallized into the complex of ideas as subsumed under the label, "négritude."

The fourth event was the publication in 1928 of the anthropological study, Ainsi parla l'oncle (Thus spoke Uncle), by the Haitian physician, Dr. Jean Price-Mars. His book was written to refute the racist thesis of the psychological study of a Frenchman, Gustave Le Bon, which bore the title of Lois psychologiques de l'évolution des peuples (Psychological Laws of the Evolution of the Races). Taking


issue with LeBon, Dr. Price-Mars turned to ethnological study of the black peoples, beginning with the Haitians. Soon *Thus Spoke Uncle* was followed by other treatises on the folklore, religion, and the language and customs of Haiti. Writing as a scientist, Price-Mars sought to expose to the public the true heritage and human vitality of the Haitian people and by extrapolation that of black men in general.

Which of the several events of history described above is of greatest importance to a study of Afro-French literary and folk creativity is an unnecessary concern here. But it is important that he who undertakes to introduce contemporary Afro-French literature into the secondary school curriculum should at least be familiar with each one of them. For often, it is one of these events or a combination of them that provides the primary source of inspiration and content for the literary production of black writers. Thus any attempt to present a work of any of these authors ignorant of the historical and social changes that stimulated their creative genius would be to emasculate the real literary and cultural significance of literature of Negritude. Since it is principally "littérature engagée," social protest literature, it has a social function as well as a literary one. The American poet, Samuel W. Allen points out that:

These poets, like poets the world over, deal with the great themes of human life; love, death, religious experience, friendship, etc. There is, however, common to all of them a passionate concern for the alien role of the Negro in the West, a preoccupation...which has evoked varying reactions on the part of the white world, from a
fraternal admonition to treat more 'universal' themes to expressions of a rather bored annoyance with the 'eternal obsession with race.' In this regard it is significant to note that there is in modern African poetry a strong self-assurance, a new feeling of confidence in the expression of racial and cultural pride. This poetry shows indifference to the attitudes of those who are strangers to the Negro poets' world attitude which involve, moreover, a failure to perceive that the prescriptions of the Negro in the West have been for him, except for certain varying superficial aspects, as absolute and inevitable a part of human life as the usual subjects of poetic concern are for the poet writing in a dominant tradition.18

If the aforementioned events of history gave rise to the Black Renaissance, then it was New York's Harlem that nurtured it during its years as a fledgling. Under the leadership of Alain L. Locke, philosopher and literateur of Howard University, himself a Negro, young Black writers and scholars from many countries made their way to the Black Mecca and absorbed its vitality. Writing of Harlem during this period, Locke says:

It has attracted the African, the West Indian, the Negro American; has brought together the Negro of the North and the Negro of the South; the man from the city and the man from the town and village; the peasant, the student, the business man, the professional man, artist, poet, musician, adventurer, and worker, preacher and criminal, exploiter and social outcast. Each group has come with its own separate motives and for its own special ends, but their greatest experience has been the finding of one another. Prescription and prejudice have thrown these dissimilar elements into a common area of contact and interaction. Within this area, race sympathy and unity have determined a further fusion of sentiment and experience. So what began in terms of segregation becomes more and more, as its elements mix and react, the laboratory of a

great race-welding.
Out of the experience of living in they see themselves as victims of the established system of white racism, European and American. Hence, they make open attacks upon those institutions that are symbols of the established order, namely, organized religion as symbolized by the Church, the law as symbolized by the police, education as symbolized by the large white universities, holidays honoring the makers and rulers of the system, the government, etc. They denigrate all that is white and extol all that is black.¹⁹

The Black African writer of négritude has but one idea, that is to make manifest the black soul. They do not write for Europeans or white Americans. They write for Blacks about things that are black. Some among them openly reject everything European or Caucasian. At times their emotional extolling of the virtues and superiority of blackness borders on racism in reverse. The degree of rejection of European values and the acceptance of black values varies from writer to writer. It appears that these writers of the early 1920's embrace a conciliatory Negritude as manifested in the poetry of Senghor, Léon Laleau, and Jacques Roumain. What they reject is assimilation in favor of an integrated culture, a type of synthesis of African and European values. However, the works of a great number of Afro-French porte-paroles of Negritude are expressions of bitterness and flagrant rejection and defiance of all that represents Europe or colonialism as expressed in the following lines:

Rendez-les-moi mes poupées noires

qu'elles dissipent
l'image des catins blâmes marchandes d'amour
qui s'en vont viennent
sur le boulevard de mon ennui.

(Give me back my black dolls
To disperse
The image of pallid wenches, vendors of love
Who come and go
On the boulevard of my boredom)

The poet rejects European customs for those of Africa. For
European logic and reason, he chooses intuition and feeling.
Though he employs language to describe his plight, the poet
of Negritude insists that it is with the sense of feeling
that his poem or narrative should be read. He instructs
his audience therefore to listen and to feel. On this point,
the South African writer, Ezekiel Mphahlele says:

He [the European] may teach me how to make
a shirt or to read and write, but my forebears
and I could teach him a thing or two if only
he would listen and allow himself time to feel. 21

In his definition of "Soul", the American counter-
part of negritude, Lerone Bennett, a Black editor, and
historian writes:

Soul is a metaphorical evocation of Negro
being as expressed in the Negro tradition. It
is a feeling with which an artist invests his
creation, the style with which a man lives his
life. It is above all, the spirit rather than
the letter; a certain way of feeling, a certain way
of expressing one-self, a certain way of being. 22

20 Léon G. Damas, "Limbe," Anthologie de la nouvelle
poésie nègre.
22 Mercer Cook and Stephen E. Henderson, The Militant
Black Writer, in Africa and the United States (Madison:
For his literature of emotion and feeling, the French-speaking author of African extraction finds himself faced with the task of expressing his Black African-ness in a language ill-fitted to the task. French is an analytical language in which logic and reason are the dominant features. It is a language perfect for expressing the abstract, while the African intuition and emotion crave a language that is warm, passionate, and concrete. Thus the Haitian poet, Léon Leleau laments:

This beleaguered heart
Alien to my language and my dress
On which bite like a brace
The borrowed sentiments and customs of Europe;
Mine is the agony
The unutterable despair
In breaking with the cold words of France
The pulsing heart of the Senegal.23

In an attempt to bridge this gap between their language and their feelings, many Caribbean writers employ rather freely in their works, creole words and expressions. Some of the more militantly anti-French ones have produced whole works written in creole. However, the audience for these works is automatically limited to those persons who speak and understand this native dialect. Thus the author of Nègri-tude, if he has been liberated of European values and standards and has reclaimed those of his African heritage, must find a suitable language in which to express them. To what gods may he turn?

23 Senghor, Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre, p. 108.
CHAPTER VI

INTRODUCING AFRO-FRENCH LITERATURE AND CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

Arise shine; for thy light is come.

Isaiah 60:1

The preceding chapters present an introduction to the beliefs, concepts, customs, and institutions that compose African civilization and give substance and sustenance to African literature and culture of French expression. Inasmuch as culture, anthropologically speaking, is the totality of the beliefs, patterns of behavior, and institutions shared by all members of a group, community, tribe or race, any effective teaching of the literary and cultural contributions of that community or race is dependent upon the teacher's knowledge and appreciation of the sources from which these contributions sprang. To teach a language is to teach culture. The two cannot be separated. The language teacher is forced to teach both. Thus, if he knows nothing about the culture of the peoples whose language he is teaching his efforts in the classroom will be meaningless. Concerning this two-fold task of the language teacher Robert Politzer writes:

As language teachers we must be interested in the
study of culture (in the social scientist's sense of the word) not because we necessarily want to teach the culture of the other country but because we have to teach it. If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning; for unless he is warned, unless he receives cultural instruction, he will associate American concepts or objects with the foreign symbols.1

How applicable are Politzer's words to the teaching of African creative expression written in French? The teacher will find it necessary to refer again and again to the foregoing chapters and to consult other sources as he prepares each day's lesson.

Preparation for Instruction

Probably the first consideration in preparing for teaching Afro-French literature and culture to American high school students is to become aware of the extent of their knowledge of Africa. In the main, the average class will be composed of three types of students: (1) those who know nothing about Africa; (2) those whose knowledge is extremely limited; (3) and those whose knowledge consists of gross distortions of the facts. In the light of the foregoing, the teacher should begin by introducing his students to the geographical land mass that forms the Continent of Africa. To do this, he should be careful to use a modern map or globe of the World so that the students may visualize the geographical relationship and significance of Africa to the rest of the World. This

should be followed by a close-up view (using an overhead projector and transparencies) of the current political divisions (nations and territories). All materials used in this introductory phase of study should be in French. From the beginning the students learn the French appellation of each country and peoples. The teacher should emphasize only those facts that are absolutely essential to the students' understanding of the folk and literary contributions that they will study later. By all means, he should avoid giving a lecture on the geography and political divisions of Africa! On the other hand, he should be very careful to point out that the French-speaking countries of Black Africa lie South of the Sahara Desert in contradistinction to those of North Africa. Students should be encouraged to consult some of the standard reference works in the library for the purpose of expanding their knowledge of the countries and peoples of Africa South of the Sahara. This same procedure may be followed for introducing the students to the French West Indies and to French Guiana.

Each classroom presentation should be prepared well in advance. Care should be exercised to accentuate the authentic rather than the exotic and bizarre in African life. In planning, the teacher needs to follow a recommended format such as the one below:
Daily Lesson Plan

a. Objectives
b. Activities
c. Assignments
d. Evaluation techniques
e. Bibliography
f. Instructional aids and sources

The objectives for each lesson should be clearly stated and understood by the teacher. Moreover, they should conform to the overall objectives of the unit or course. The teacher must never lose sight of the fact that his primary task is to teach the target language. Each literary selection used should serve to aid the learner in developing greater skill and knowledge in manipulating and understanding the French language. The teacher's first concern, then, should be to foster language mastery. The cultural component of each lesson should complement and supplement the linguistic component and not take precedence over it.

Instructional materials presenting authentic information in African life are not so abundant as those that treat life in Metropolitan France. Therefore, planning for instruction should be done far in advance if classroom activities are to be meaningful learning experiences. The aims, objectives and proposed class activities should dictate the choice of teaching materials and aids. Just any picture, poster or film on Africa will not suffice. This means that all materials utilized should be chosen based on well established criteria.  

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3 See Chapter VII.
If the local school library does not have adequate materials, the teacher should check the African collection of the public library. Many public libraries have begun to develop collections of Africana. Until an adequate supply of commercially prepared teaching materials becomes available, the teacher will have to secure them from whatever source he can. When these are not available he will have to use his ingenuity and creativity in constructing them. For such tasks, he can utilize the creative talents of his students and fellow teachers, as well as that of Africans who may be residing in the local community.

Since the teacher proceeds, culturally speaking, from the concrete to the abstract in language teaching, and since both he and his students will need a suitable point of departure for his literary and cultural journey through French-speaking Africa and the West Indies, it is recommended that he begin by introducing his class to the land mass of Africa as it appears on a map or globe. Before asking the students to look at a map of Africa, the teacher prepares the class for what is to come.

Teacher: "Aujourd'hui nous allons parler de l'Afrique." The teacher quickly writes the word "l'Afrique" on the chalkboard and pronounces it aloud signaling to the class to repeat after him. After a brief choral repetition of the word, the teacher continues:

Teacher: "Nous allons apprendre quelque chose sur l'Afrique. Qui peut nous dire quelque chose sur l'Afrique? Levez-la main?" He pauses and looks around the room for a raised hand. Of course, he should be prepared to move ahead in case no student raises his hand.

Student: L'Afrique est très grande.

Teacher: Très bien, Joséphine! Maintenant, regardons le carte monde. Où est l'Afrique? Qui sait? Several students raise their hand.

Teacher: Robert, s'il vous plaît, montrez-nous l'Afrique.

Student: (Pointing to Africa on the map). La voilà, Monsieur.

Teacher: Très bien, Robert. Regardons la carte de nouveau. Où est la France? A student points to France on the map. "Très bien!" "Qu'est-ce qu'il ya entre la France et l'Afrique?"

Student: Il y a la mer Méditerranée.

Teacher: "Qu'îl mademoiselle. Qu'est-ce qu'il y a entre l'Afrique et les Etats-Unis d'Amérique?"

Student: "Il y a l'Océan Atlantique."


After pointing out the location of Africa on the map and its proximity to France (Europe) and its distance from the United States, the teacher in subsequent lessons focuses attention on the geography and topography of Africa. There are numerous ways to do this; however, the writer made use of a set of specially prepared transparencies and a series of pattern structures for this initial phase of study. An outline of the continent of Africa was flashed on the screen. The teacher instructs the class to look at the geographical form on the screen. The teacher then says:
Teacher: Ecoutez bien. L'Afrique est un continent. Répétez après moi. L'Afrique est un continent." Il continue in the same way with the following patterns: L'Afrique n'est pas un pays. Le continent africain est grand. Le continent africain est plus grand que les États-Unis. Le continent africain est trois fois plus grand que les États-Unis.

While modeling the last pattern, the teacher places an overlay on the outline of Africa. The overlay shows a series of three outlines of the map of the United States which roughly fall within the boundary of the continent of Africa. He then guides the class in repeating the last pattern. He then puts the class through a rapid repetition drill including all five patterns. The teacher replaces the transparency showing the continent of Africa with one that gives a rough outline of an elephant's ear. Turning to the class he says:

Teacher: Qu'est-ce que c'est? Il models the answer for the class. "C'est l'oreille d'un éléphant. Répétez. C'est l'oreille d'un éléphant.

Teacher: L'éléphant est un grand animal d'Afrique. Répétez.

Teacher: Il y a beaucoup d'éléphants en Afrique.

Teacher: (Replacing the transparency with one that shows an outline of the continent of Africa and that of an elephant's ear, one besides the other) "Regardez et écoutez." "Le Continent africain ressemble à l'oreille d'un éléphant. Répétez.

These patterns plus the five presented earlier are thoroughly drilled until the student's repetition of them is
almost automatic. To foster aural comprehension and the
student's ability to manipulate the patterns in a meaningful
way, the teacher shows each of the transparencies again and
again and asks the following questions:

Est-ce que l'Afrique est un continent?
Est-ce que l'Afrique est très petite?
Est-ce que l'Afrique est plus grande que les Etats-Unis?
L'Afrique, combien de fois est-elle plus grande que
les Etats-Unis?
Le continent africain à quoi ressemble-t-il?
Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'un éléphant?
Est-il grand ou petit?

In subsequent lessons the teacher moves from the con-
tinent of Africa to a study of specific countries south of the
Sahara Desert. By means of specially prepared cultural cap-
sules which are well integrated into the regular course work
the class learns the major cities, ports, rivers, etc., for
each francophone republic. For these activities the teacher
will find visuals excellent in plonging the students into the
midst of an African setting. If at all possible, all visuals
used should be in color. The teacher should neither rush
through this phase of instruction nor move too slowly. The
interest of the students and their success in retaining the
information covered should dictate the pace.

In the second quarter the class should move to the study
of the peoples and cultures of Africa. For the teacher in a
predominantly black school, an interesting technique for in-
troducing the class to the peoples of Africa is to assemble a
collection of photographs of Africans—young and old. Each
photograph should show a full view of the face of each African.
With the aid of an opaque projector these photographs are shown
to the class. However, the teacher is always careful to prepare the class for what they are to see prior to showing the first picture. A classroom presentation may proceed as follows:


Student: Les Américains!


Les habitants de l'Afrique s'appellent les Africains.

The teacher drills these two structures several times before introducing other patterns. He continues:

Teacher: "Ecoutez la question. Qui a vu un Africain? Levez la main." Several hands are raised.

Teacher: "Magnifique! où est-ce que vous l'avez vu?"

Student: Je l'ai vu à l'université.

Teacher: Qui. Il y a des Africains à l'université." The teacher continues: "Maintenant regardons quelque photo d'Africains." Flashing the face of a teen-age boy on the screen, the teacher asks:

Teacher: Oui. est-ce? Almost simultaneously the students reply:

Student: C'est un garçon.

Teacher: "C'est un garçon africain. Répétez.

Teacher: "C'est un jeune africain. Répétez."
Teacher: "Quel âge a-t-il?"
Student: Il a dix-sept ans.
Teacher: Est-ce qu'il est beau?
Student: Oui, il est très beau.

Showing the picture of a young girl the teacher leads the class through the same routine drilling each question and answer when needed. He then leads the class in a drill in which the class describes each photograph with an appropriate adjective. For example:

C'est une Africaine.
Elle est très jolie.
C'est un Africain.
Il est très grand.
C'est un bébé africain.
Il est très beau.
C'est un Africain.
Il est vieux.

The same exercise is repeated using the negative when appropriate. To cue the desired response the teacher reverses the order of the photographs.

If the photographs are those that present Africans as they really are, the students will quickly begin to notice a resemblance between the African countenance and some that they know in their own family, community or in their school even. Thus a feeling of identity begins to be created which, if properly nurtured, can lead to renewed interest in learning French, especially when they are able to see and hear Africans speaking French via films or in person.

This same collection of photographs may be used to teach African appellations. Since the class will have spent several
days working with the photographs involving different classroom activities, the giving of a name to the African in each picture will follow naturally. The teacher begins by saying:

"Aujourd'hui nous allons faire la connaissance de nos amis Africains. Ecoutez bien."

Teacher: (While the photograph of a boy shows on the screen) Permettez-moi de vous présenter mon ami Africains, Ngando Mamadou. Répétez, "Ngando Mamadou."

Teacher: Comment s'appelle-t-il?
Class: Il s'appelle Ngando Mamadou.

Teacher: "Chacum individuellement." He moves around the room guiding each student in saying the name correctly. This exercise is repeated for a selected number of the photographs, thus assisting the students in remembering and pronouncing African names, a task that is not easily accomplished for the average American. Since African names are more than simple appellations, they can seldom if ever be used as a translation of an English name. Therefore, if the students wish to adopt African class names, they will have to use an arbitrary system of selection which is not recommended in view of the traditional significance of names in African tribal culture.4

During the first few months of class, Afro-French selections for classroom use should be short and of a linguistic difficulty commensurate with the student's level of proficiency in the foreign language. For all new words or unfamiliar expressions the teacher should provide each student with a list of these with a simple definition or explanation written in French. The students must not be left to guess the meaning of new or unfamiliar words and expressions. For

4See Chapter II, Institutions, Traditions, Customs, and Beliefs Underlying Afro-French Life and Culture.
many of the vocabulary items that the students will meet for the first time in Afro-French literature, the teacher will have to construct a functional description or definition. In such cases, he is advised to give as simple a definition or description as necessary to make the meaning clear and to build upon it as the class proceeds through the course. An example of a teacher-constructed description of an African term which will be unfamiliar to most American high school students is the word "griot." To convey to his class the meaning of "griot" the teacher explains: "Le griot est un poète du village qui chante les louanges et les actions courageuses des vivants et des morts d'une famille. As the class continues to meet the griot in various literary selections under different circumstances it will afford the teacher with numerous opportunities to enlarge and embellish his definition. The students should be guided in reading each selection for comprehension and for discussion. Key questions should be prepared which will serve as stimuli for class discussion. The procedure followed by the teacher should be to begin with the relatively simple and move progressively to the more difficult.

Evaluation of the learner's growth and comprehension may take several forms: (1) the teacher's systematic observation of the learners interest and participation in class activities, (2) the frequency and quality of their unsolicited oral and written comments, questions and criticisms of Afro-French selections studied, (3) the degree of readiness and depth of
perception of their answers to key questions prepared by the teacher, (4) their performance on teacher-made tests, (5) their initiative in doing more than the daily assignment, (6) the development of a more positive attitude toward Africa and the peoples and cultures whose heritage is African.

Teaching An Afro-French Folk Song

Singing in the foreign language has always been a definite part of the learning activity in most classrooms. The pedagogical, cultural and linguistic values of singing in the target language are well known to the alert teacher. Like all other activities in language teaching, singing must be done always in accordance with a clearly defined goal. It should never be done aimlessly or solely for entertainment.

As has been pointed out in preceding chapters, music and dance pervade all of African life. Rhythm, sound, movement, and color are essential components of the dynamics of the world of Africa. Therefore, in introducing the American student to African folk music, the teacher should plan far enough in advance to do justice to the significance of singing in African culture.

It should be said here that African folk music is created in the idiom of its creators and it is sung in that tribal tongue. Thus it would be rare indeed to find French-speaking African youths singing folk songs in French. But this fact should not completely deprive American youths who are learning French from sharing the experience of singing
about things African. Even though the songs used in the American classroom are translations from the African dialects, those that are available have been translated by specialists in African languages.

In a letter to the writer, Alphonse Leduc and Company writes about some African folk songs available in French:

As a matter of fact, the songs are genuine African folk music, but the original texts, as sung on the spot, are in the respective languages and dialects. For use and application in France or countries of French language, we had a specialist of African dialects translate them into French. For all we know, they might be sung in French classes of French schools in Africa, but it should be well understood that the original texts are collected on the spot and translated. This is evident by the African titles they bear.\footnote{Personal letter from Alphonse Leduc Company, December 4, 1970.}

Moreover, music (rhythm, tone, beat, melody, etc.) is a type of universal language which speaks to the inner being of humans across languages and cultures. Nowhere is this more obvious than in a high school classroom when the students hear a familiar melody and rhythm. In many instances, today's secondary school student is very sophisticated musically. Educational and commercial television and films have introduced him to African folk music long before he enters high school. Many will have acquired fascimiles of African drums and other musical instruments. So because of their proficiency in French they can enter more fully into a cultural as well as a musical experience. However, the classroom teacher should be more concerned with enriching the student's
cultural knowledge of African life, and the songs is only the medium through which he chooses to do it.

African music springs from deep within the folk culture. Like African life itself, it is colorful, emotional, powerful, and collective. It involves everyone from the youngest to the oldest. This fact should be brought to the class in as vivid a manner as possible—at its first encounter with African singing. As an introduction to African music and folk singing, a specialist or resource person in African folk music who is able to "communicate" with high school students could be invited to give a lecture—demonstration. If presented in an assembly hall, the demonstration could be made available to all French classes at once. The demonstration should be planned to involve the students, if only in a minor capacity, clapping their hands or swaying their shoulders to the rhythm of the music. Also they may be taught a refrain which they are required to sing on cue from the speaker. By means of these and similar group activities, the students can be made aware of the collective spirit that permeates African singing, and how the act of singing often involves movement of all parts of the body.

There is no one way to teach a song. But for certain types of songs and singing some techniques have proved more effective than others. For simple songs, the students should listen first to the melody played on the appropriate instrument if available or via a recording. While reading the words and listening to the melody, the teacher sings or repeats
them aloud to the tempo of the music. The melody is played again and during this playing of it, the teacher leads the class in singing or saying the words of the song, correcting errors in pronunciation when they occur. He must not tolerate poor pronunciation any more in singing than he would tolerate it in speaking the target language.

If the song is one that calls for action, the teacher demonstrates each action while singing or while the melody is being played. He then leads the class in doing the same thing. The third time, he assists the class in singing the song, fitting the words to the action. If the teacher does not sing himself, he can beat the tempo of the song by gently tapping on the top of his desk with a ruler, and giving the command for the students to perform the required action at the proper time. For example, while tapping the teacher counts:

"Un, deux, trois, quatre, tournez et sautez.
Un, deux, trois, quatre, Ramassez les filets.
Un, deux, trois, quatre, tournez et sautez, etc."

The same procedure is followed when the words of the song are sung. Until the students feel the rhythm and can sense the beat on which to perform the action, the teacher may find it necessary to call out aloud the action to be performed. This should not be necessary, however, because usually African rhythm or "beat" is very pronounced and students are able to pick up on it very quickly with little effort.

Another technique for aiding the students in following the rhythm of the song being learned is to have them clap in
time with the dominant beat of the accompaniment if they are hearing a recording. This is an excellent technique for motivating the non-musical or non-rhythmical student to participate. Unless the clapping pattern is extremely complicated, which is not recommended for use here, the average student will be able to participate and will find it fun doing so.

As in the case of other activities designed to improve foreign language learning, once taught, a song needs to be reviewed and re-inforced through drill and practice if it is ever to form a part of the student's repertoire of songs. So it is incumbent upon the teacher to provide for periodic follow-up singing sessions during which students will review in singing the songs that they have been taught. If planned with imagination and creativity, these follow-up sing-alongs can be both linguistically and culturally rewarding, and socially entertaining.

In the paragraph to follow an African folksong and suggestions for classrooms use will be presented. The words and music of the one song presented below and the one presented in the Appendix are used by permission of:

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175, rue Saint-Honoré
Paris 1er
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Lesson Plan

Title of Song: Le Kaloulou

Instructional Aids: Sufficient number of copies of the song preferably with musical notation. Tape recording of the melody, a series of transparencies depicting yams, a chicken, potatoes, a mortar and pestle, a series of flash cards that give the cardinal numbers from 1 to 100.

Objectives:

A. Linguistic

1. To provide practice in the manipulation of numbers

2. To provide additional audio-lingual practice in the production of the sounds [u] and [i]

B. Cultural

1. To acquaint the students with a celebrated
African dish and how it is made.

2. To learn some of the staple foods of French-speaking Africa.

Activities:

The teacher must properly motivate the class for engaging in a learning experience through song. For "Le Kaloulou," it is very important that he does this because the song itself is very short and when viewed in print may strike the class as being infantile. However, the teacher realizes that it is a teaching device and uses it as such. In this activity, the teacher uses "Le Kaloulou" to give traditional practice in the quick recall of numbers in French. At the same time the students receive re-inforcement in reproducing the vowel sounds [u] and [a]. Having established his goals, he proceeds to teaching the song.

With this particular song, it may be more interesting to the class for the teacher to use the overhead projector and show the words and music on the screen. This way the teacher, using a pointer whose reflection will also show on the screen, can guide the class in singing the words in time with the recording more easily than if each student looks at an individual copy. Moreover, sharing the same copy suddenly makes the class a collective unit so characteristic in African culture.

In order that the class will know what it is singing about, the teacher teachers the principal objects named in the song. Using visuals the teacher shows a chicken and says "une
poule." The class repeats the word. This continues until the students have been exposed to all of the objects. To heighten motivation, the teacher may wish to omit "Kaloulou." When showing the mortar and pestle, the teacher repeats the phrase "Tape, tape mon pilon" while performing the motion of pounding. After a rapid repetition of all of the items introduced, the teacher guides the class in singing the song.

Though short, "Le Kaloulou" can be a resource for many interesting and effective teaching techniques. Since the melody resembles the sound of church bells, the students usually enjoy singing it in rounds. Singing in rounds is nothing new to most French teachers in classroom singing. But for this song the teacher adds a new feature, the quick recall of numbers in French. This exercise forces the student to manipulate the system of counting while singing. An exercise of this nature will proceed as follows:

Teacher: Chantons "Le Kaloulou." Mais cette fois nous chantons en canon. (Pointing to each group.) Voici le groupe 1, le groupe 2, le groupe 3. Le groupe 1 commencera le premier, et quand je l'indiquerai, le groupe 2 commencera, et enfin le groupe 3. Chantons. Un, deux, trois, chantez.

The class sings the words in rounds for several times.

Now the teacher says:

Teacher: Dans le chanson que fait le petit Africain?
Student: Il fait le Kaloulou?
Teacher: Mais oui! Il fait Le Kaloulou. Qu'est-ce que le Kaloulou? (Giving a sign of forgetfulness) J'ai oublié de vous dire.
Student: Le Kaloulou est quelque chose que l'Africain mange.
Teacher: Oui. Le Kaloulou est un plat célèbre dans plusieurs pays africains. C'est une sorte de "casserole" très délicieuse. (He shows a picture of a casserole on the screen.) Aujourd'hui nous préparons une surprise partie. Il y aura beaucoup de monde à notre partie. Une vingtaine de personnes peut-être. Nous voulons préparer un Kaloulou. Est-ce que nous en préparons un grand ou un petit?

Student: Nous en préparons un grand.

Teacher: Oui! (Gesturing as if thinking.) Mais combien de poules, d'ignames, de patates faut-il? Voyons! Chaque groupement en chantant combien de poules d'ignames, de patates il va mettre dans son Kaloulou et nous verrons s'il sera bon. N'est-ce pas? Ecoutez le premier groupe. Chantez.

Each group sings individually while the other two listen and at the end of the singing they sing in chorus "Le Kaloulou sera bon" if they approve or "Le Kaloulou ne sera pas bon" if they do not. Students enjoy doing this because each group strives to make its Kaloulou larger than the preceding one. As a control and evaluative measure, following the groups free substitution activity, the teacher holds up a flash card bearing the number the group is to use to tell the number of yams, chickens or potatoes it will put into its Kaloulou, beginning with those numbers that students remember easily and moving to those numbers that give them difficulty. This part of the exercise assures that all numbers will receive sufficient repetition.

Although the teacher touched on an aspect of African culture earlier in his dialogue with the class, he knows the significance of returning to that aspect or some other aspect for the purpose of guiding the class in making further
discoveries and deriving greater knowledge of African life
and culture. Returning to the question "Qu'est-ce que c'est
que le Kaloulou?" the teacher says:

Teacher: Parlons de nouveau du Kaloulou. Nous avons dit
que "c'est un plat célèbre dans certains pays africains. Avec quoi prépare-t-on le Kaloulou?

Student: On le prépare avec une poule, des patates et des
ignames?

Teacher: Où va-t-on pour acheter la poule et les légumes?

Student: On va au marché.

Teacher: Très bien.

At this point the teacher tells the class a few im-
portant facts about the staple foods produced in Africa and
about the African diet, eating habits, etc. He may include
facts about the open market in Africa but if he does he should
have some visuals depicting scenes from the market to show to
the class or else the students will think of it in terms of
an American super-market or farmer's market. Neither comes
near to the African open market in terms of organization, of
what is sold there, and of the animation and congestion of
human bodies.

As a second cultural feature, the teacher emphasizes the
act of pounding the ingredients to be used in the Kaloulou,
because a typical sight in most of Black Africa is that of
a young boy or girl, or woman busily pounding a mortar
singing to a syncopated rhythm while the mother, the wife,
sister, aunt or grandmother squats hovering over the mortar
and with her hand examines the constituency of the crushed in-
gredients. The pounding of yams or manioc in the open yard
is as familiar a scene in Africa as the beating of the tam-tam or dancing. Since it is a means by which the African prepares many of his principal dishes, it becomes in a sense an essential part of his survival. Once the students are lead to a knowledge of these facts the little song "Le Kaloulou" becomes a cultural capsule when digested properly enables them to experience an important phase of African life.

All African songs are not like "Le Kaloulou" in melody and rhythm. Most African folk music is lively and vibrant, in nature, and responsorial and polyphonous in structure. When first heard it may sound like noise to the unfamiliar ear. However, its forceful rhythm and powerful "beat" soon cause the non-African to feel what his ears cannot decode. American youths, steeped in the latest rock'n roll rhythms where often the "beat" holds sway over the words, welcome an experience with the fervid, sparkling, tortuous but graceful African rhythms. Since these songs are highly repetitious, they have a built-in re-inforcement in pronunciation and enunciation. This repetition makes learning of the songs easy.

The language laboratory or a tape recorder can be used very effectively here to acquaint the class with African music. Recordings of selected musical selections both vocal and instrumental can be made available for extraclass listening. They form excellent extensions to the "cultural island" established in the classroom. Since so many of
African life activities are effected with the accompaniment of music, the American student in his effort to experience to some degree the folk culture of Africans will find that the most accessible route is via an understanding and appreciation of African music. To "understand" African music does not indicate an intellectual experience as much as it indicates a sensuous experience. Therefore, the American student should be encouraged when performing or listening to African music to participate in it. African folk songs include a broad spectrum of daily life touching on all aspects of the culture.

The song, "Kodjla Ko"* sung in a tribal tongue of the Ivory Coast is the song of oarsmen, les piroguiers. Consisting of a simple verse, "Zambie - a Kodjla-Ko", it resembles the well known music of "Volga Boatman." In a footnote the publisher gives this explanation about "Kodjla Ko":

N. B. chant s'exécute comme celui des "Haleur's de la Volga." Commencer posément, sans hâte, amplifier et développer le crescendo jusqu'à la reprise du texte et aller en descendo jusqu'au pianissime dans le sens contraire de la partie bouche fermée. (This chant is performed similar to the

*Words presented in Appendix B.
"Volga Boatman." It begins calmly and steadily, grows progressively louder and reaches a crescendo at the resumption of the words; and continues in decreasing volume until it reaches pianissimo in the opposite sense with lips closed.)

One difficulty for the classroom teacher who would like to introduce his class to a wide selection of African folk songs is that of overcoming the barrier set up by the tribal language in which all of these songs originate and in which most of them are sung. Since the specialist uses the French sound system in transcribing words of the tribal dialect, students of French will not find pronouncing of the words difficult; but inasmuch as no glossary has been provided, they will not know what the words mean. However, instead of viewing this as an insurmountable handicap, teachers of French should view it as a challenge to join hands with the specialist in African dialect, the musicologist, the publishers, and the African peoples to develop a collection of African folk songs that will be suitable for classroom use.

Today this need is being met somewhat by means of recordings. However, these are available in very limited quantities. But since they are designed for mass consumption, they are not always applicable for classroom utilization. On the other hand, there are on the market today in major American cities some very excellent recordings of African songs with accompanying booklets that give the words. So the classroom teacher can take heart. This may announce the beginning of greater accessibility of musical Africana suitable for classroom use.
Teaching the Afro-French Conte

The conte or folktale is, for the African, a "Book of Wisdom" preserved from generation to generation for the education and preservation of succeeding generations. It is also his theater to which he turns for entertainment and relaxation. When the shades of night suddenly envelop the hills and villages, the members of the household or compound assemble to revel in the daring conquests of great chiefs and bold huntsmen, to listen to the bewitching ruses of clever men and animals, to revere the noble deeds of sagacious and indomitable ancestors, to behold in awe the startling intrigues in which spirits and magic intervene for good or for evil recounted with unequalled artistry by the village or family "griot," the official story-teller.

The African conte is anchored in daily life on earth, therefore, it has both utilitarian and entertainment value. It is utilitarian in that it is used by the adults to teach the young the facts of life and the art of existence. The family "griot" is as common to the African child as the family doctor is to many American children. His influence on the young African's life and thinking is incalculable. Referring to his childhood griot, the Senegalese writer, Birago Diop says:

Lorsque je retournai au pays, n'ayant presque rien oublié de ce qu'enfant j'avais appris, j'eus le grand bonheur de recontrer, sur mon long chemin,
levieux Amadou Koumba, le Griot de ma famille.  

(When I returned to my country, having forgotten almost nothing of this that I learned as a child, I had the good fortune of meeting on the road my family Griot, Ol'Amadou Koumba.)

More than an entertainer, the griot is often the village genealogist and also the preserver and transmitter of tribal history and tradition. It is he who keeps the historical and traditional record in tact and passes it from one generation to the other largely by means of the conte. It is not surprising that the folktale enjoys a greater notoriety in Africa than its counter-part in the United States.

In Africa as in the United States, story-telling is an art which demands great skill. Herskovits describes an African story-telling session thus:

Familiarity with the total setting in which the tale is told was gained by attendance at story-telling sessions held in the compounds at night. Here could be noted the dynamics of voice change, the play of expression on the face of the story-teller, the use of gesture to vivify narration, the songs, the dance steps in brief, all the elements that give the tale stylistic unity and amplitude. Only a hidden mechanism that would simultaneously film and record a story-telling session could fully convey the artistry of the teller of tales in this setting, and give a sense of the interplay between narrator and audience that is so important an aspect of the spoken narrative tradition.

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7 Melville J. Herskovits, Dahomean Narrative, p. 9.
An awareness of the role of oral literature in African cultures is the first step toward the development of a more than superficial understanding of its significance as a vehicle for expressing the soul of the folks who created it and for preserving the institutions and customs that nurture it. To a great extent the African folktale is history and African history is the folktale so closely are they linked with real people, places, and events.

Though written in French, the African folktale is, in every respect, African. This fact needs to be thoroughly understood and accepted by the teacher. The African conte originated as an oral creation. It exists to be told actively rather than to be read passively. It originated as a collective activity involving the story-teller and the listeners. It involves action-gestures, mimicry, singing and even dancing—often to the accompaniment of musical instruments. It is a drama that embraces all segments of life on earth, the religious and the secular, the natural and the supernatural, the human and the animal.

Plans for teaching the African conte should be grounded in a thorough knowledge of the cultural heritage of Black Africa. Ignorance of the societal and geographical matrix in which this genre of creative expression was incubated and nurtured will inevitably lead to errors in interpretation and understanding. The folk narrative is a type of "autobiography" of a people and he who dares to introduce students of another culture to it ought to be adequately informed on the institutions, beliefs, customs and traditions that make up
the heritage of that people.

The initial step in planning to teach the African folk narrative is to read it several times. It should be read first to determine the appropriateness of its contents for use in the secondary classroom. It should be read a second time in order to evaluate its vocabulary range and level of grammatical difficulty. Narratives that contain a large number of unfamiliar vocabulary items and grammatical structures should be avoided at the beginning level. It should be read a third time aloud. The final reading grows out of the realization that the literary tradition in African culture is oral. Therefore, the teacher should include in his preparation practice in narrating the story aloud in order that he may serve as a model for his students in the classroom.

The types and contents of the African folk narrative are many and varied. But for the convenience of the secondary school French teacher, they may be grouped under two general headings: folktales and literary contes. The fundamental difference between the two groups is that the folktale has no single individual as its author. The literary narrative names one or more individuals as its author or editor. Herskovits groups the Dahomean folktales into two broad categories: (1) the "hwenehoh" or "time-old-story", and (2) the "heho", the common tale or yarn.\footnote{Ibid., p. 15.} Stories belonging to the "hwenehoh" category draw their contents from history and tribal
or communal tradition. They are considered to be historically true. Those composing the "heho" category are largely inventions of the imagination. They are "tales" in the generally accepted sense of that word. The sub groups of each category are as follows:9

Hwenoho

1. Myths, comprising chiefly stories of the deities, of the peopling of the earth.

2. Clan myth - chronicles, which recount the origin of the great "families" or clans and their adventures through time. In their fullest form, these include explanations of ritual behavior, food taboos, and the positive sanctions that make up the ancestral code.

3. Verse-sequences, usually sung in recitations, and composed mainly by professional verse-makers for the purpose of memorizing genealogies, and events that have been incorporated into ritual law.

Heho

1. Divination stories

2. Hunter stories

3. Enfant terrible stories
   a. Twins
   b. Orphans
   c. Children-born-to-die
   d. Abnormally born

4. Yo stories

5. Tales of Women: Love, Intrigue, and Betrayal

6. Explanatory and Moralizing tales

7. Transformation tales, and other miscellaneous types.

9Ibid., p. 17.
Examples of the "hwenoho" tales bear such titles as:

The African literary Conte is very similar to the folktale in style and content. It is usually written or edited by a highly literate person gifted with creative writing ability. The African literary narrative conforms to standards of the best in creative literary narration. In the contes of Birago Diop of Senegal, of Gilbert de Chambertrand of Guadeloupe, of Phillippe Thoby-Marcelin and Pierre Marcelin of Haiti, of Bernard Dadié of the Ivory Coast, the day-to-day world of their people is recreated as effectively as that in the folktales. These and other French-speaking Africans and West Indians have provided the teacher of French with a veritable treasure of creative folk literature that fully merits a place in the classroom of the secondary school.

How does one prepare to teach an African folktale in French? The first concern of the teacher should be the statement of the purpose for teaching the particular story selected. Does the story provide an interesting way for teaching, reviewing and/or re-inforcing certain features of French grammar being studied or that have been studied recently in class? Is it a means for preparing the students to read more advanced literature in the target language? Will it contribute to the student's development of a more positive cross-cultural understanding? These and similar questions must be raised and
answered by the teacher as he prepares for class, if the
goals and objectives for the lesson are to be clear to himself
and steps to achieve them firmly laid. The familiar state­
ment that those teachers teach best who know what they plan to
teach and why they teach it is a propos here.

How much time the class will devote to the study of
each story is another question that must be answered. The
length of time devoted to the study of any single narrative
will be governed by the nature and scope of the purpose and
objectives of the lesson - to what extent the "conte" will be
utilized to teach certain selected features of the foreign
language and culture. However, care should be exercised not
to spend any more time on any one selection than is absolutely
necessary to achieve those stated aims and objectives.

Following the plan given earlier in this chapter, in
preparing to teach an African folk narrative, the teacher
should set up two types of objectives - linguistic and
cultural. Only those objectives which can be achieved in
the time allotted should be listed. In listing the objectives,
the teacher should group the linguistic objectives together
and the cultural objectives together. This practice makes
for clarity and renders the lesson plan easy to follow and
the outcome easy to evaluate.

Linguistic objectives should be to teach, review or
re-inforce a particular feature of grammar, syntax or pro­
nunciation such as to teach the use of the past definite tense
or to review the [ø] sound in French. Objectives that are stated
too broadly impede rather than aid instruction. Cultural objectives should be to promote cross-cultural understanding, to develop more positive inter-cultural and interracial attitudes, and to supply the student with a few pertinent facts. In establishing each cultural objective the question, "How can this objective be evaluated?" must be asked and answered by the teacher. "To develop a feeling of identity in the student," is one of the overall goals of the course and can hardly be achieved by studying a single narrative. Besides, such an objective is not easily measured. The selection of a narrative to be used in a regular French course must be made in full recognition of its relatedness to the particular features of the language that are currently being studied or that have been studied recently. The narrative chosen to be studied in class should always re-inforce linguistically what has been learned in class. The student should be able on his own to recognize in the story those grammatical, syntactical and phonological features of French that he has met in previous class sessions. Unless this is done, the student will not be able to apply what he has learned in earlier classes to the task at hand. As far as he can tell, the two are virtually unrelated. Unless the student is able to apply his previously acquired skills to a further strengthening of his knowledge and culture, the selection chosen for use in the class will be inappropriate and will impede instead of aid learning. So the teacher has the professional obligation to guarantee that every example of Afro-French literature used in class will be thoroughly integrated with what has preceded it and
with what will follow it.

Realizing the importance of this task, how would the teacher proceed in choosing a story for his class? Let the reader imagine that at this point the members of the class have completed a unit on the past definite tense, and on the imperative sentence. Checking through his annotated bibliography of African literature of French expression, the teacher finds the conte, "Le Salaire" by the Sénégalaise writer, Birago Diop. Upon rereading and re-examining it, he sees that the past definite tense is heavily utilized, that the imperative of the second person singular form (Tu) is used throughout the dialogue, and also the expressions "jusqu'à" and "jusqu'à ce que" appear very frequently. The vocabulary is simple, containing fewer than ten words that would be completely strange to a second level class.

What about the contents of the conte? It tells the story of an African child who does an alligator a favor only to be taken advantage of and eventually rescued by the clever but practical wit of the rabbit. In the course of the narration, the story-teller describes or alludes to many features of African life, customs, and beliefs. From the point of view of culture, the teacher concludes that the story is good. It incorporates many examples of the past definite tense and of the second person singular form of the imperative. For the use of "jusqu'à" and "jusqu'à ce que" he decides to take advantage of this opportunity to teach the
meaning of these two expressions. His decision made he begins his plan for teaching.

Below is the outline of a lesson plan for teaching the African narrative, "Le Salaire." (Complete story is given in Appendix C)

Lesson Plan

Title: Le Salaire
Author: Birago Diop

Instructional Aids: A sufficient number of copies of the narrative so that each student may have one. Transparencies or clear, large size drawings of a crocodile, an African child, a cow, a horse, a rabbit. (These visuals could resemble those used in comic strips). A recording of the narrative, preferably by a native speaker. A coat-of-arms showing a lion in the center, and a seal of the United States.

I. Objectives:

A. Linguistic

1. To review the use and formation of the past definite tense.

2. To provide further practice in the use of the two expressions: "jusqu'à" and "jusqu'à ce que."

3. To review the use of the imperative using the second person singular, "Tu."

B. Cultural

1. To acquaint the student with some of the animal characters that appear very often in African folktales and narratives.

2. To introduce the student to the conte as a vehicle for equipping the African youth with certain basic principles for daily living.

3. To acquaint the student with certain customs, beliefs, and practices either described or alluded to in the narrative that are indigenous to Africa.
II. Activities:

The teacher has to take steps to properly prepare the students for what is to come. In anticipation of the class's reading the conte, "Le Salaire," the teacher leads the class in the following drill.

Teacher: Répétez les phrases suivantes en changeant le verbe au passé défini.
Modèle: Albert parle au professeur
Albert parla au professeur.

Teacher: Jean arrive à sept heures.
Class: ........ arriva ........

Teacher: Marie entend le bruit.
Class: ........ entendit ........

Teacher: Il va dans la forêt.
Class: ........ alla ........

Teacher: Marie entend le bruit.
Class: ........ entendit ........

Teacher: Il va dans la forêt.
Class: ........ alla ........

Teacher: Robert dépose ses livres sur la table.
Class: ........ déposa ........

Teacher: La petite fille appelle sa mère.
Class: ........ appela ........

Teacher: Il demande de l'argent à son père.
Class: ........ demanda ........

Teacher: Le marchand interroge ses clients.
Class: ........ interrogea ........

Teacher: Elle marche vers le jardin.
Class: ........ marcha ........

Teacher: Le médecin affirme le rapport.
Class: ........ affirma ........

Teacher: L'enfant ficèle le paquet.
The teacher expands this drill to include the other persons (first, second, and third) singular and plural. In addition to reviewing and re-inforcing the students' ability to manipulate audiolingually the past definite tense, the teacher has introduced his students to almost all of the verbs they will meet in the conte that they will soon read. Since they will read the conte, each student should be provided with a written copy of this drill in order that he may associate the oral utterance of the past definite tense with its written form. Students should receive copies of the drill only after it has been practiced thoroughly in class.

Moving to the review of the second person singular form (tu) of the imperative, the teacher guides the students through the following pattern practice:

Teacher: Répétez les phrases suivantes à la forme impérative.

Modèle: Tu me parles
Parle-moi

Teacher: Tu m'écoutes.
Student: Ecoute-moi.

Teacher: Tu me lâches.
Student: Lache-moi.

Teacher: Tu m'expliques.
Student: Explique-moi.

Teacher: Tu ficèles la notte.
Student: Ficèle - la.
This drill, too, prepares the student for the dialogue between the boy and the alligator and later in the story between the rabbit, the alligator and the African boy. Using the same cue sentences the teacher may ask the students to answer in the negative.

The next step in the preparation of the class to read with comprehension the narrative requires the teacher to teach the meaning and use of "jusqu'à" and "jusqu'à ce que."

For this task the teacher has prepared two sets of visuals. The first set consists of four frames. Frame I shows a boy entering a small river. Frame II shows him standing in water above the ankle. Frame III shows him standing in water up to the knee. Frame IV shows him in water up to his chest. While the students look at Frame I, the teacher says: "L'enfant entre dans la rivière," Répétez. The students repeat the sentence after the teacher. Showing Frame II the teacher says: "L'eau lui arrive jusqu'aux jambes." He points to the water and to the boy's legs as he says the words "l'eau" and "jambes." He asks the class to repeat after him. He follows this pattern until the entire drill has been completed. The instructional patterns used are as follows:
Teacher: L'enfant entre dans la rivière.

Teacher: L'eau arrive jusqu'aux jambes.

Teacher: Il va plus loin et l'eau lui arrive jusqu'aux genoux.

Teacher: Il va encore plus loin et l'eau lui arrive jusqu'à la poitrine.

After he has drilled these structures sufficiently the teacher leads the class in a recombination question-answer drill to ascertain to what degree the students have learned to use "jusqu'à" in a sentence. Showing each frame again in the same order the teacher asks:

Teacher: Qu'est-ce que l'enfant a fait?
Student: L'enfant est entré dans la rivière.
Teacher: Qu'est-ce que l'eau a fait?
Student: L'eau lui est arrivée jusqu'aux jambes.
Teacher: L'eau lui est arrivée jusqu'aux genoux, etc.

Using the same order, the teacher shows each frame a third time. This time he says to the class: "Regardons de nouveau les images. L'enfant est entré dans la v rivière. Ecoutez bien et répétez après moi." Here the teacher leads the students through the drill below:
Teacher: L'enfant est entré dans la rivière.

Teacher: Il est allé jusqu'à ce que l'eau lui atteignit les jambes.

Teacher: Il est allé jusqu'à ce que l'eau lui atteignit les genoux.

Teacher: Il est allé jusqu'à ce que l'eau lui atteignit poitrine.

By means of a recombination question-answer drill similar to the one used with "jusqu'à", the teacher can check the students' understanding and ability to employ "jusqu'à ce que" in a sentence. At this point in the course, the teacher is interested in the students knowing the meaning of the two expressions in order to perform a specific task—to read comprehendingly the story which is to come later. Therefore, he builds his patterns using as many vocabulary items from the story as possible. However, he is careful to use the same verb in each pattern. This is necessary if the students have not studied in depth the subjunctive. With the aid of the visuals, the students readily understand the meaning of the verb, "atteindre." For extended practice, drills using other objects can be constructed also. Mimeographed copies of the drills are now given to each student for study and review at home and in the laboratory. In order to re-emphasize the idea that both expressions say virtually the same thing a set of two patterns illustrating the use and meaning of "jusqu'à" and "jusqu'à ce que" appear one after
the other on the page and bear the same number. For example:

1. L'eau lui est arrivée jusqu'aux jambes.
2. Il est allé jusqu'à ce que l'eau lui atteignît les jambes, etc.

The teacher is now ready to introduce the folk narrative. For this task the classroom activity would probably proceed as follows:

Teacher: "Aujourd'hui nous allons lire un conte africain."
(He passes a copy of the story to each student.)
Maintenant, écoutons le conte raconté par un narrateur. Tandis que le narrateur parle, suivez-le en lisant en silence. Commençons.
The tape recorder is started and during the story the teacher monitors the class and notes on his pad any words that the students appear not to understand to be clarified at the end of the activity or at a subsequent class session.

At the conclusions of the narration, the teacher explains that there are a few words whose meaning the students do not know. A sheet containing all new words in the story is given to each student. The teacher pronounces each word, asks the students to repeat the word after him, then gives a brief definition in French for each one which he has the students to repeat. For example:


2. Bambin - C'est un petit garçon, etc.

To foster an understanding of the cultural component of the conte, the teacher prepares a series of varied activities. Some of which are performed in class while others are to be done at home. Since most members of the class will be familiar with stories of this type in their own culture,
this type of story will be nothing new, except that it is in French. However, this familiarity can be both an advantage and a pitfall for the teacher. So the teacher has to concentrate on those aspects of the story that reflect authentic African culture. Such an activity may begin by identifying the names of all of the principal characters, the location of the setting, and the event that precipitated the action.

Teacher: Comment s'appellent les personnages principaux de l'histoire?

Student: Ils s'appellent (several students will supply the names of the different characters.)

Teacher: (Insisting that the full name of each character be given) Non, Cécile. Il s'appelle, "Goné-l'enfant," et la vache, comment s'appelle t-elle?

Student: Nagg-la-vache.

Teacher: Mais oui! Rappelez vous que chez les Africains, le nom est très significatif, très important. Et en général, un nom africain est aussi très long. Avez-vous un nom très long?

Student: Non, monsieur. Mon nom est très court.

Teacher: Très bien. En général les Américains portent des noms courts comme--- (The teacher pronounces several American names to illustrate his statement.)

Teacher: Où est-ce que l'histoire s'est passée?

Student: Elle a commencé près d'un lac. Elle a pris fin au bord d'un fleuve.

Teacher: Oui. Parlons du commencement de l'histoire. Il y avait des femmes. Que faisaient-elles?

Student: Elles puisaient du l'eau. Elles lavaient le linge.

Teacher: Est-ce qu'elles travaillaient en silence?
Student: Non. Elles parlaient beaucoup.
Teacher: De quoi parlaient-elles?
Student: Elles parlaient de la fille du roi.
Teacher: Qu'est-ce qui est arrivé à sa fille?
Student: Elle est tombée dans le lac et elle s'est noyée.
Teacher: Est-ce la vérité? Qui l'a affirmé?
Student: Une esclave l'a affirmé.
Teacher: Qu'est-ce que le roi allait faire?
Student: Il allait faire assécher le lac.
Teacher: Qu'est-ce que Diassique-le-Caïman pensait de cette idée?
Student: Il en a eu peur et il est parti.
Teacher: Où est-il allé?
Student: Il est allé loin à l'intérieur des terres.
Teacher: Qui l'a trouvé?
Student: Goné-1'enfant l'a trouvé?
Teacher: A ce moment-là, qu'est-ce que Goné-1'enfant cherchait?
Student: Il cherchait du bois mort.

The teacher continues to question the class until the high points of the story have been reviewed, making certain that he has included a question on those items of African customs and culture that he will assist the class in discussing more fully.

During another class period he returns to the setting of the story and explores it in greater detail with his students.
Teacher: Regardons de nouveau le commencement de l'histoire. Qu'est-ce que les femmes faisaient?

Student: Elles lavaient le linge.

Teacher: Où est-ce qu'elles le lavaient?

Student: Elles le lavaient dans le lac.

Teacher: Oui. Remarquez qu'en Afrique les femmes vont au lac ou à la rivière pour laver le linge parce qu'elles y trouvent beaucoup d'eau fraîche et propre. Elles ne font pas le linge à la maison parce qu'il n'y a pas assez d'eau. Les maisons africaines n'ont pas d'eau courante.

Usually this explanation provokes many questions among students, especially the girls. The teacher needs to be prepared to take advantage of this interest—and to channel it into constructive learning experiences. Continuing his discussion of this custom, he explains that this feminine chore has a social side as well. Here the women learn the latest news, and exchange the latest savory bits of gossip. So it is for them a pleasant task, similar to going to the beauty parlor for American women.

The second activity treating African culture as revealed in the story brings the students in contact with a different level of instruction for effective living. They are made aware of how the folk narrative is used to teach the young African certain fundamental concepts of life. Beginning by asking the students to tell how Goné-l'enfant helps the alligator, the teacher can move to the main lesson in the story and its application for the young African. The students will recognize immediately that the story illustrates that one good deed should be returned by another good deed.
When one performs a task for good he should be rewarded accordingly. However, in the African tale the author, being a practical minded individual, as Africans are, introduces a utilitarian solution which shows that the recompense for a good deed unappreciated will bring down the wrath of the doer upon the head of the receiver. In this connection, the teacher will need to explain the significance of the totem in African culture. He can do this by using a coat-of-arms which bears the figure of an animal. Using the symbol of the animal, the teacher proceeds as follows:

Teacher: (Displaying a coat-of-arms) Voici l'emblème de ma famille. Au centre de l'emblème voila un animal. Qu'est-ce que c'est?

Student: C'est un lion.

Teacher: Oui, c'est un lion. Pour ma famille le lion est un animal sacré. Nous ne le tuons jamais. C'est notre totem. (Displaying the seal of the United States, he continues.)

Teacher: Voici l'emblème des Etats-Unis. Qu'est-ce qu'il y a au centre?

Student: Il y a un'aigle.

Teacher: Oui, c'est le totem du peuple américain. Et comme nous autres Américains, les peuples Africains ont des totems. Ce sont des animaux sacrés. C'est pourquoi Leuke-le-Liévre a demandé à l'enfant, "Ce n'est pas ton totem?

Although this explanation is, perhaps, an overly simplified one which may not tell the whole story of the role and significance of the totem in African traditional culture, it will serve the immediate task, and can be enlarged upon as
the class advances in its study of Afro-French literature
and culture.

As an evaluation of follow-up activity, the teacher
asks the students to write a story similar to "Le Selaire,"
using the same theme, but changing the ending. They are to
build their story on the list of words that he has prepared
to help them. He asks the students to work in groups (not
more than four to a group). He provides each group with a
list of the following words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>petit garçon</th>
<th>bon</th>
<th>se coucher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vieillard</td>
<td>malade</td>
<td>neige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chien</td>
<td>marcher</td>
<td>pluie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pauvre</td>
<td>amis</td>
<td>neiger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maison</td>
<td>mourir</td>
<td>pleuvoir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faim</td>
<td>fatigué</td>
<td>cadeau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>froid</td>
<td>feu</td>
<td>tous les jours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chaud</td>
<td>lait</td>
<td>semaine derrière</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>soupe</td>
<td>chercher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the stories are finished each group is asked to
appoint a narrator who reads its story to the class. During
each reading, the teacher records in his notebook errors in
grammar and syntax for review and restudy. But all errors in
pronunciation he corrects as they occur. If the groups have
worked effectively they will have done at least the following:

1. Used many of the grammatical and syntactical
   structures encountered in the African story;

2. Utilized at least two of the three past tenses
   used in the conte—the past definite, the past
   indefinite, the imperfect;

3. Utilized the second person singular form (tu) of
   the imperative;
4. Demonstrated the universality of the importance of a kindness shown to others.

**Teaching African Poetry**

Every French-speaking black people has produced its share of outstanding poets. To many scholars of French literature the works of these black makers of verse are well known and well respected. The fact that their poems have rarely been included in anthologies of French verse attests neither to a lack of creative poetic productivity on the part of Blacks nor to the excellence of the quality of their poems. Poetry is indigenous to Afro-French cultures extending from Madagascar to the West Indies. These cultures abound with folk poetry that, like the folk tale and the folk song, records the struggles, the hopes and frustrations of a people. There are also the poetic creations of individual francophone Blacks that merit being included in the French diet for young Americans along with the poems of French poets from France. This, then, becomes the task of the classroom teacher. How shall he do it?

Afro-French poetry is basically African. It emanates from the innermost depths of the soul of the poet and is nurtured in the cradle of his society. Therefore, if Afro-French poetry is to be fully experienced, it must be approached as an expression of the soul and the way of life of black peoples. Speaking to this point, Ladislas Segy says:

> Any art work is the expression of the inner life of its creator. At the same time the artist is in a specific society and his work therefore will
express the ideologies of that society. A work of art is, then, a 'document' of its culture.  

Poetry is a literary art. Robert Lado states that "to experience a literary work, it is necessary to understand the language in which it is expressed, the cultural meanings which it contains, and the circumstances surrounding it." A first step for the teacher is to understand and adopt the point of view of the African culture before attempting to guide his students in an attempt to experience by means of the poem something of that culture. The teacher's principal concern is not to develop poets but to devise learning experiences that will promote appreciation of African poetry in particular and, by extension, poetry in general.

Perhaps, the most functional guidelines to understanding the nature of poetry—especially poetry written by Blacks—and its place in the secondary school classroom came from the pen of Langston Hughes, a black American poet. Hughes writes:

...let's investigate certain reasons for using poetry at all, as distinguished from other sources of literary art, in the classroom. There comes to mind immediately the fact that since many poems are brief, concise, and to the point—literary time-savers—often more can be done with a poem in a limited classroom period than with a story or an essay.

Poems employ rhythm, often rhyme. These two devices help greatly to fix in the mind what is being said. Long after school days are passed, a


line or two, or a verse of poetry learned and loved will remain in the memory... Poetry can be a vocabulary builder.

Poetry is rhythm — and, through rhythm, has its roots deep in the nature of the universe; the rhythms of the stars, the rhythm of the earth moving around the sun, of day, night, of the seasons, of the sowing and the harvest, of fecundity and birth. The rhythms of poetry give continuity and pattern to words, to thoughts, strengthening them, adding the qualities of permanence, and relating the written word to the vast rhythms of life.  

Hughes' description of the nature of poetry is that of a black poet, thus the great attention to the role of rhythm. Rhythm is the essential ingredient in black poetry be it American or African. Black poetry contains a "beat" and a "melody" similar to that encountered in black music and dance. Words and rhythms harmonize and blend into a single synthesis. If such is the case, then Afro-French poetry may be expected to deviate in rhythm and language usage from the traditional French "art poétique." The Afro-French poet often finds it necessary to embellish his poem with a particular word or phrase from his own tribal language or native patois which expresses better the emotion, and the meaning that he wants to convey. Such embellishment usually permits the poet to adopt a pattern of poetic rhythm reminiscent of or coincident with the rhythms of his native music and dance. This observation is corroborated by the black poet, Samuel W. Allen as follows:

The French language itself is not the perfect instrument for the expression of the African poet in his integrity. French is the language of a

people distinguished for their analytical genius for the precision of their logic — a language excelling in its mastery of the abstract, but not in its description of the concrete. The African poet finds that his impulse is essentially passionate and concrete, having little to do with logical exposition of abstract ideas.\(^{13}\)

The Haitian scholar, Maurice Lubin has expressed it thus:

> If we were to limit our consideration to those themes which belong to all peoples, to all races, in fact to mankind in general we might be tempted to confuse Haitian literature with that of France. This would be a hasty and superficial judgment, because two peoples separated so widely by geographical, historical, social, economic, and cultural conditions cannot express their feelings with the same resonance, even if they use the same language. Language and feeling are not synonymous.\(^ {14}\)

Black francophone poets treat in their poems the major themes common to all mankind: love, friendship, suffering, sorrow, death, religion, war, Nature, happiness, and beauty. But these have been "africanized" by means of a type of environmental, social, political and cultural baptism in the folk tradition and institutions of black peoples — peoples who for centuries were bent under the yoke of colonialism in Africa, and slavery and exploitation in the West Indies; and who today are struggling to safeguard their ethnic heritage and identity against European assimilation.


\(^{14}\) Maurice Lubin, "Haitian Poetry," Présence Africaine, 2e trimestre (1962), 140-158.
To a great extent, this fact leads the Afro-French poet to write for himself. His poems are for him and speak directly to him. Therefore, at times, his symbols and poetic language may seem distant and hermetic - requiring the teacher to read each selection with understanding and insight prior to planning for teaching it in class.

The purpose for teaching each poem should be clearly delineated and goals and/or objectives to be achieved concisely stated. The temptation to "study" a particular poetic selection because it is "pretty" should be firmly rejected because the class activity will soon degenerate into "busy work" and will give the students a false idea of the importance of poetry as a literary art. The purpose and goals for studying poetry should have a significance for the student. They should be within the grasp of the student in the time allotted. This demands care in the selection of the poems to be read.

The study of poetry by French-speaking black poets may be approached from a number of different ways. Irrespective of the approach chosen, the teacher must always be the hub of the learning experience. Because he knows thoroughly the scope of the language program and the goals to be achieved by those who complete the program, the teacher must, in the final analysis, decide what poems will be studied in his class and in what context. His decision will take into consideration his students' level of competence in the target language, the average chronological age, and mental outlook,
Poems that are too infantile in content will prove as inappropriate for average senior high school students as those that are too heavy laden with philosophical profundities. An excellent guide to the selection of appropriate poems for the high school classroom is stated by June T. Gilliam in the following words:

Our first poems .... will have strong rythms and recurring phonological patterns. Their structure will be simple and their vocabulary easily grasped through visualization or paraphrase. They will have few cultural differences that require prior knowledge.¹⁵

Using the quotation above as a guide, and reflecting on the composition of his class, its level of competency in French, the concern of his students about Africa and events relating to peoples of African descent, the teacher selects the poem or poems to be read and analyzed in his class.

As an illustration of using Afro-French poetry in the classroom, the writer presents below suggestions for teaching the poem, "Prière d'un petit enfant nègre" by the Guadeloupean poet, Guy Tirolien.

Prière d'un petit enfant nègre

Seigneur je suis très fatigué.
Je suis né fatigue.
Et j'ai beaucoup marché depuis le chant du coq
Et le morne est bien haut qui mène à leur école.
Seigneur, je ne veux plus aller à leur école,
Faites, je vous en prie, que je n'y aille plus.
Je veux suivre mon père dans les ravines fraîches

Quand la nuit flotte encore dans le mystère des bois
Où glissent les esprits que l'aube vient chasser.
Je veux aller pieds nus par les rouges sentiers
Que cuisent les flammes de midi,
Je veux dormir ma sieste au pied des lourds manguiers,
Je veux me réveiller
Lorsque là-bas mugit la sirène des blancs
Et que l'Usine
Sur l'océan des cannes
Comme un bateau ancré
Vomit dans la campagne son équipage nègre...
Seigneur, je ne veux plus aller à leur école,
Faites, je vous en prie, que je n'y aille plus.
 Ils racontent qu'il faut qu'un petit nègre y aille
Pour qu'il devienne pareil
Aux messieurs de la ville
Aux messieurs comme il faut.
Mais moi je ne veux pas
Devenir, comme ils disent,
Un monsieur de la ville,
Un monsieur comme il faut.

Je préfère flâner le long des sucreries
Où sont les sacs repus
Que gonfle un sucre brun autant que ma peau brune.
Je préfère vers l'heure où la lune amoureuse
Parle bas à l'oreille des cocotiers penchés
Ecouter ce que dit dans la nuit
La voix cassée d'un vieux qui raconte en fumant
Les histoires de Zamba et de compère Lapin
Et bien d'autres choses encore
Qui ne sont pas dans les livres.
Les nègres, vous le savez, n'ont que trop travaillé.
Pourquoi faut-il de plus apprendre dans des livres
Qui nous parlent de choses qui ne sont point d'ici?
Et puis elle est vraiment trop triste leur école,
Triste comme
Ces messieurs de la ville,
Ces messieurs comme il faut
Qui ne savent plus danser le soir au clair de lune
Qui ne savent plus marcher sur la chair de leurs pieds
Qui ne savent plus conter les contes aux veillées.
Seigneur, je ne veux plus aller à leur école.

In accordance with the guideline stated above, this poem has "strong rhythms and recurring phonological patterns."
The repetitious phrases cited below are all outstanding examples of this rhythmic quality and phonological redundancy.

Je veux, Je ne veux plus

..........................
Aux messieurs de la ville
Aux messieurs comme il faut
Ces messieurs de la ville
Ces messieurs comme il faut.

Qui ne savent plus danser
Qui ne savent plus marcher
Qui ne savent plus conter.

The vocabulary of the poem consists principally of simple and concrete words. Its tone is conversational. It contains few inversions in sentence structure. The poet employs only three different tenses — the present indicative, the passé composé, and the present subjunctive. Though the poet uses several metaphors, these are composed of simple descriptions of familiar objects and, hence, will pose little difficulty for the advanced second level or the first quarter, third level student. Moreover, they are excellent vehicles for developing the student's sensitivity to the "language" of the poet.

In the cultural realm this prayer or poetic monologue will acquaint the student with one area of concern among Africans vis-à-vis the western world, their struggle to preserve their African heritage against European influences represented by the French school system and the manufacturing plants. The poet chooses the traditional African education in which one learns from the great book of Nature and from the wisdom of the ancestors instead of from books written in Europe by Europeans. The following plan presents suggested ways for utilizing this poem and similar poetic selections in a secondary school French class:
Lesson Plan

Title of poem: Prière d'un petit enfant nègre

Author: Guy Tirolien

Instructional Aids: A recording of the poem, a tape recorder, a sufficient number of copies of the poem

Teaching Objectives:

A. Linguistic

1. To aid students in acquiring additional skill in manipulating the present subjunctive using "il faut" and "pour que"

2. To aid students in their oral manipulation of the French vowels: \[\text{\textit{i}}\text{\textit{y}}\]

Cultural

1. To acquaint the student with the anxiety of French-speaking Black's concerning the loss of their traditional African heritage

2. To expose the conflict between European educational and industrial influences and the customs, traditions, and beliefs which are cherished vestiges of the mother culture

Activities:

The simplicity of the verses of this poem makes it an ideal vehicle for reviewing and re-inforcing certain principles of French grammar, syntax, and phonology as well as for introducing and drilling a few new phrases. Because most of the verses are complete sentences stated in the normal word order, the teacher has a ready-made model on which to build a variety of teaching and/or re-inforcement drills. Using the phrase "Il faut qu'un petit nègre y aille" the teacher constructs the following re-inforcement drill for the present subjunctive.
Teacher: Répétez la phrase suivante en employant la forme convenable du verbe que je donnerai.

Modèle: Il faut qu'un petit nègre y aille. (Venir)
Il faut qu'un petit nègre y vienne.

Teacher: Regarder.
Student: Il faut qu'un petit nègre y regarde.
Teacher: Rester.
Student: Il faut qu'un petit nègre y reste.
Teacher: arriver.
Student: Il faut qu'un petit nègre y arrive.
Teacher: descendre.
Student: Il faut qu'un petit nègre y descende.
Teacher: monter.
Student: Il faut qu'un petit nègre y monte.
Teacher: mourir.
Student: Il faut qu'un petit nègre y meure, etc.

Similarly utilizing the phrase "pour qu'il devienne pareil aux messieurs," the teacher constructs the following drill:

Teacher: Répétez les phrases suivantes en employant la forme correcte du verbe que je donnerai.

Modèle: Pour que vous parliez bien.

Teacher: demeurer.
Student: Pour que vous demeuriez ici.
Teacher: Chanter.
Student: Pour que vous chantiez correctement.
Teacher: Être.
Student: Pour que vous soyez pareil aux messieurs comme il faut.

In reading the poem, the students and teacher will be able to recognize other familiar patterns on which similar drills may be constructed.

In this poem, the teacher finds many suitable pronunciation drills especially of the French vowel sounds: [a], [e], [o], [u]. Sounds that give many Americans real trouble in their oral reproduction in the language. The following lines provide the student with excellent drill in producing the four sounds indicated above:

Je suis nê fatigué
Je vous en prie, que je n'y aille plus
Què glissent les esprits
Je veux aller pieds nus
Que cuisent les flammes de midi
Ecouter ce que dit dans la nuit
Je ne veux plus y aller
Je veux me réveiller.

In terms of possible teaching activities, this poem lends itself to as many as the teacher's imagination and pedagogical knowledge is able to formulate. For example, the first two lines of the poem can be used to build an interesting and amusing activity in the use of the adjective in French. Each student is asked to repeat the sentence changing the adjective each time. He must not repeat an adjective that has been used earlier. Written these exercises would look like this:

Exercise A

Je suis très fatigué.
Je suis très content.
Je suis très heureux.
Je suis très joli.
Je suis très malade.
Je suis très nerveux.
Je suis très jeune.
Je suis très impatient, etc.

Exercise B

Je suis né riche.
Je suis né vieux.
Je suis né laid.
Je suis né beau.
Je suis né curieux.
Je suis né blanc, etc.

In addition to providing practice in using the adjective in French, it is also a vocabulary building exercise. The students get practice in quick recall of descriptive words in French. Since each member of the class is required to use a different adjective, the student is forced to increase his supply of adjectives in order to participate in this quasi-game learning activity. The teacher may offer a small prize to that student who uses the largest number of adjectives correctly.

Another vocabulary building device available to the teacher is a restatement, in one or more words each, of the metaphors that the poet uses. The teacher assists the class in isolating each metaphor. Then he asks the students to express the same idea in a single word or in as few words as possible. So that the students may see the metaphors more closely, the teacher writes each one on the chalkboard leaving adequate space to the right of it to write the restatement of it. When completed the exercise will appear as follows:
Since this poem is a monologue of supplication, the poet states his concerns forthrightly. So from the very beginning the reader is apprised of the poet's physical state. In the next lines he says why he is tired. In the fifth line he states his principal concern in the negative, "je ne veux plus aller à leur école," which is re-echoed throughout the entire poem. With such direct statement of the problem, the teacher should experience no difficulty in guiding the students in isolating those influences and institutions in the poet's country that are destroying his link with his African past. Therefore, the teacher will find an approach that focuses directly on the poet's words as he builds his argument against European influences and for indigenous institutions and culture to be more logical and functional in exploring the cultural component of the poem.

To achieve the goals that the teacher has set for himself and his students, he should begin the study of the poem with a playing of a recording of it inviting his students to read silently along with the voice on the tape. If the recording is a good one, some, if not all, of the students will begin to sense the anxiety and tone of resentment.
expressed. How does the poet achieve this? What techniques does he use to convey his feelings and message to the reader? A study of the poet's technique is a good point of departure for exposing to the students the cultural importance of "Prière d'un petit enfant nègre." This activity should be one of discovery on the part of the students with the teacher making certain that every student participates.

Realizing that the poem is actually an argument with major premises and supporting evidence for each, the teacher designs classroom activities with this in mind.

First he begins with a few words about the poet, where he was born, where he received his education, and in this case where his country is located since it is not on the continent of Africa. It is important that the students know this in order that they may better understand certain descriptions and allusions found in the poem. He then aids his students in interpreting the title. In this part of the lesson the teacher explains:

Teacher: Aujourd'hui nous allons lire un poème. Ce poème a été écrit par Guy Tirolien, un poète de Guadeloupe. Il est né à Pointe-à-Pitre en 1917. Qu'est-ce que c'est que la Guadeloupe? Est-ce une ville? Est-ce un état? Qui sait?

Student: La Guadeloupe est une île.


Teacher: Quel est le titre du poème?
Student: "Prière d'un petit enfant nègre."

Teacher: Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'une prière?

Student: C'est une conversation adressée à Dieu.

Teacher: Donc, dans "Prière d'un enfant nègre" le poète parle à l'Etre Suprême, n'est-ce pas? Voyons!

Second, the teacher focuses attention on the people and objects referred to in the poem. He proceeds as follows:

Teacher: Regardons le poème. Qui veut nommer toutes les plantes tropicales y compris les arbres mentionnés dans le poème? (Several students raise their hands. The teacher calls on one of them.)

Student: Il mentionne les manguiers, les cannes à sucre, les cocotiers et les bois.

Teacher: Est-ce qu'il a mentionné des gens?

Student: Oui. Il a mentionné les blancs, le petit nègre, son père, un monsieur, les messieurs, un vieux les nègres.

Teacher: A-t-il mentionné des animaux?

Student: Oui. Il a mentionné le coq et le lapin.

Teacher: Quelles institutions a-t-il mentionnées?

Student: Il a mentionné l'école, la ville, l'usine.

Teacher: Est-ce qu'il a mentionné d'autres choses?

Student: Oui. Il a mentionné les livres, les contes, les histoires et la nuit.

Zeroing in on the information given him by the students the teacher guides them via carefully "placed" questions to consider the context in which the poet uses the names of objects, places and people.

Teacher: Voyons ce que le poète dit de chaque chose que vous avez trouvé dans le poème. Qu'est-ce qu'il a dit de l'école? Lisez du poème.
Student: (Reading) Seigneur, je ne veux plus aller à leur école.

Teacher: Est-ce qu'il y a d'autres lignes où il mentionne l'école?

Student: Oui Monsieur. (Reading) Et puis elle est vraiment trop triste leur école.

Teacher: Qu'est-ce que le petit enfant nègre a dit au début du poème?

Student: (Reading) Seigneur, je suis très fatigué. Je suis né fatigué. Et j'ai beaucoup marché...

Teacher: Qu'est-ce qu'il a dit des blancs?

Student: (Reading) Lorsque là-bas mugit la sirène des blancs Ils racontent qu'il faut qu'un petit nègre y aille.

Teacher: A votre avis qui sont les blancs? Quelle est leur nationalité?

Student: Ce sont des Français.

Teacher: Qui parle dans le poème?

Student: Le petit enfant nègre.

Teacher: Qu'est-ce qu'il veut dire par "Je ne veux plus aller à leur école? L'école de qui?

Student: L'école des Français.

Teacher: Pourquoi l'enfant ne veut-il plus aller à l'école des blancs?

Student: Parce qu'elle est triste. Parce qu'elle est loin de sa maison. Parce qu'on parle des choses qui ne sont pas de son pays.

Teacher: Qu'est-ce qu'il veut faire?


Teacher: Selon l'enfant, qu'est-ce que les blancs ne savent plus faire?
Student: Ils ne savent plus danser le soir au clair de lune.
Ils ne savent plus marcher sur le chair de leur pieds.
Ils ne savent plus conter les contes aux veillées.

Teacher: Est-ce qu'il parle de tous les blancs?
(Here the teacher gets mixed answers of "Oui" and "non." He explains.) "Non, il ne parle pas de tous les blancs. Il parle des "messieurs comme il faut," des blancs cultivés qui ont fait leurs études dans les écoles européennes. Les blancs civilisés selon les critères de l'Europe.
(The teacher now asks the principal question.)
Est-ce que c'est un enfant qui parle dans ce poème?

Student: Non. C'est un homme.

Now the teacher has moved the students to the point of readiness for examining in greater detail the way the poet has organized his poem, his manner of attack on the unwelcome European influences, his use of symbols and figures of speech to express whole ideas (the restatement of the metaphors used earlier is applicable here also), the vividness of his descriptive language, e.g., "les rouges sentiers que cuisent les flammes de midi." If prepared imaginatively, these can be exciting learning experiences for both teacher and student. The student is led to discover a wealth of cultural information which he never dreamed could be so neatly enveloped in so few lines.

Another means of demonstrating to the class the logical organization or unfolding of the poet's ideas is by means of a diagram. Using the procedure followed in building a shelter to protect man from the cold rain or the hot sun, the teacher has a student draw a simple roof on the chalkboard.
He explains that the roof is no good as it is because it is resting on the ground. What is needed to make it useful to man? He then asks another student to draw four supporting columns. He explains that the roof represents the major premises expressed in the poem and the column represents the supporting evidence. He demonstrates his diagram using the contents of the poem.

Teacher: Pour illustrer l'organisation logique du poème, dessinons un toit. Robert, allez au tableau et dessinez un toit. (The student draws a roof).

Très bien. Mais le toit est par terre, n'est-ce pas? Est-ce qu'on peut entrer dessous maintenant?

Class: Non.

Teacher: Mais non! Qu'est-ce qu'il faut faire?

Student: Il faut lever le toit.

Teacher: Oui. Mais comment peut-on le lever?

Student: Il faut construire des murs.

Teacher: Très bien. Commençons à construire les murs. Pour commencer il faut des colonnes, n'est-ce pas? Combien?

Class: Il en faut quatre.

Teacher: Eh bien. Charles, allez au tableau et dessinez quatre colonnes. Mettez-les sous le toit, une colonne à chacun des quatre coins. (The student draws four columns, one at each corner supporting the roof.) Cela suffit, Retournons maintenant au poème. Le toit représente les principales prémisses exprimées par le poète dans son poème. Elles sont:

1. Je suis fatigué
2. Je ne veux plus aller à leur école
3. Je veux faire autres choses
4. Je ne veux pas être un monsieur comme il faut.

Pour chaque préémise, le poète donne des raisons pour la justifier, pour la soutenir. Donc, ses raisons deviennent les colonnes qui soutiennent le toit du poème n'est-ce pas? Maintenant on a un abri bien construit qui le protégera du mauvais
temps.

Though clumsy and, perhaps, a bit crude, diagrams such as this one have a role to play in elucidating literature—especially poetry—for the uninitiated. It helps them to understand that a poem just does not happen. The poet, like the architect, has a plan of development which he utilizes to convey to the reader his message. Then too, students enjoy discovering the poet's plan and illustrating it graphically. The teacher should be reminded in planning classroom activities if it motivates students to read and examine in the target language, then it is worth doing.

As a follow-up activity each student is asked to imagine himself to be the "petit enfant nègre" but instead of writing a prayer, write a letter to a friend in which he will describe something about his school or city that gives him concern. These letters should be read in class by the students instead of being passed in to the teacher. Students enjoy displaying their intellectual talents and achievements and the French teacher will do well to take advantage of their eagerness to perform.

Because of the many valuable grammatical, syntactical, and phonological patterns contained in the poem, it makes an excellent vehicle for practicing writing in French. Given as a dictation it requires the student to do discriminatory listening as well as sharpen his skill in manipulating several different types of structures that are frequently encountered in French on all levels and in all literary genres.
Instead of giving the entire poem as a single dictation, the teacher gives it in segments. If a laboratory is available, this activity should, by all means, take place in it and not in an ordinary classroom setting.

**Teaching the Afro-French Novel**

The novel, as fiction, was late coming to French-speaking Black Africa. This is understandable in a culture where the literary tradition is an oral one. Therefore, as a literary genre, the African novel is young as compared to the folktale and to poetry. It originated largely out of an attempt to present African life and culture in a more objective and realistic light and to counteract much of the erroneous and often prejudiced writings by non-Africans.

Many African novels are thesis novels. They are written with a definite goal or message in mind. For example, many are open condemnations of European colonialism and its attendant evils, while others seek to "set the record straight" concerning African communal life. Loyal to the African tradition, the novel usually centers on the collective action of a family, a compound or a village.

When discussing contemporary African novelists some critics divide them into two groups: (1) those who are concerned with denouncing colonialism and its attendant evils, and (2) those who are more concerned with style and form than with social and/or political evils that may exist.
Those novelists in group I consider the novel to be an instrument for exposing and attacking the evils of the status quo. They focus attention on awakening the reader to what is happening to him and to his civilization and culture. Of this type of novel, Edouard Glissant says, "Il devient un cri, un acte d'accusation, un appel à l'avenir, et non plus une tentative pour perpétuer les richesses du présent. (It [the African novel] becomes a rallying cry, an act of accusation, an appeal to the future and no longer an attempt to perpetuate present-day riches.) Such novels as Mongo Beti's *Pauvre Christ de Bomba*; Ferdinand Oyono's *Une Vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux nègre et la médaille*; and Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* are examples of "le roman engagé."

In group II the novelists are given more to objective presentation of everyday life in their native village. Such novels as Camara Laye's *L'enfant noir*; Phillippe Toby and Pierre Marcelin's *Canapé-vert* and *Crayon de Dieu* would belong in the latter group.

Character novels are rare among African writers. This does not mean that African novels are lacking in well drawn characters. To the contrary. The African novelist is very adept in his development of leading characters in his works but they are not presented in isolation from other members of the family or compound. They are a part of the "community" of people to which they belong and they share freely in its communal life. If a particular character is strong and powerful, his power emanates as much from the mystical and physical powers of the "community" including the dead ancestors as from the
individual himself. At the basis of his power and foresight usually is "la sagesse" which is the accumulated wisdom of generations. Hence, all the characters "belong" in a community. Their alienation, if any, does not spring from within the communal circle, it results from the creeping or racing, as the case may be, invasion of European influences—education, industry, religion, and language. Their alienation, then, is one of exterior coercion.

The African novel is a veritable tableau of the land and of its indigenous societal institutions, traditions, and customs. To a great degree it is the "fictionalized history of a people." Every aspect of community life is represented, often introduced or terminated by a time-honored African proverb that is a part of the lore of every adult citizen. Therefore, it is virtually impossible to do justice to the teaching of the African novel if one is lacking in a knowledge of the people and society from which the African novel is created.

In preparing to introduce the African novel in the classroom, the teacher should first make himself thoroughly familiar with a representative number of works by black African writers. He should also read other works relating to the country, the people, and the subject treated in each novel. The length and level of linguistic difficulty should be dutifully considered. If the novel is written on a level that is above the level of proficiency of the student, or is
too long to be completed in a reasonable time, the purpose for exposing the student to it at that level will be thwarted and the true worth of this experience will be lost.

In the beginning, the teacher should choose a novel that contains few, if any, expressions written in the author's tribal tongue or native patios unless the meaning can be easily guessed or the translation is given immediately following each expression or in a footnote. The reason for this is obvious. The student should be required to read the novel outside of class. Perhaps at first, he should be required to read a certain number of pages prior to each class period when that portion of the work will be discussed. Reading the novel in class either in French or in English should be forbidden. The class period should be reserved for those activities designed to foster greater understanding and appreciation of the novel itself as a literary creation and of the people and ideas which it presents. The following lesson plan for teaching the novel, L'Enfant noir by the Guinean novelist, Camara Laye will serve as an example:

Lesson Plan

Title: L'Enfant noir (An autobiographical novel)

Author: Camara Laye

Instructional Objectives:

A. Linguistic

*West Indian Creole.
1. To provide extended opportunity for improving reading comprehension.

2. To re-inforce the student's knowledge of the use of the imperfect and the pluperfect tenses in narration.

3. To introduce the student to some African proverbs.

B. Cultural

1. To acquaint the student with certain customs, traditions and beliefs surrounding childhood and adolescent growth and development in an African society.

2. To expose the student to a personal account of African family life.

3. To acquaint the student with the route that the young African followed in getting an education.

Teaching Materials and Aids:

Each student should have a copy of the novel. If feasible, selected passages from the novel should be recorded for listening practice in the laboratory and to be used in other imaginative classroom and/or study activities.

Activities:

When the students are told that they are to begin reading *L'Enfant noir*, the teacher should present orally a brief summary of some of the important facts in the author's life - place of birth, nationality, his early childhood, his family, his education, etc. This information will be very helpful to the students in following the unfolding of the events in the novel since it is autobiographical. After the teacher presents the resume orally a copy of it should be given to each student. The students should be required to
become well acquainted with these facts about the author to a degree that if called upon he could produce them in French with little or no difficulty.

In doing so, the teacher states:

Camara Laye est né le 1er janvier 1928 à Kouroussa, ville ancienne, située sur le Niger, à l'intérieur du pays. Son pays est la République de Guinée, Donc, il est Guinéen.

Laye a commencé ses études primaires dans une école coranique. Plutôt il s'est inscrit dans une école publique. Quand il a terminé ses études à l'école publique il a voyage à Conakry, la capitale de la Guinée, où il s'est inscrit à l'Ecole Technique. Ses études terminées à l'Ecole Technique et muni d'une bourse, Laye part pour la France où il va continuer ses études à Argenteuil, tout près de Paris.

Motivating the students to read a novel should not be difficult since by this time they will have read many selections from other genres treating African life and culture. However, if students are apathetic and not interested by this time in delving deeper into African literature and culture via longer works, it is indicative that previous experiences in this area were not interesting and rewarding for them. Therefore, the teacher should not force them to read a novel simply because he feels that they should be "exposed" to this literary genre. The success of the study of any literary work resides with the students. They must be ready to enter into the study of the chosen work from both a linguistic and psychological point of view. In preparing for teaching the novel, the teacher will find it helpful and, perhaps, effective to build a unit covering several class periods on the novel itself. This means that he draws on the body of the novel for
the material needed to teach and/or re-inforce whatever features of grammar, syntax or phonology necessary to continue his students' audiolingual mastery of the target language. But also included in every lesson will be an opportunity for advancing his students' knowledge and understanding of African life and culture.

The autobiography of Camara Laye is built around five major events in his life. Each one can be used as a nucleus on which to build a sub-unit of the main unit of study. The five principal events are:

1. Watching his father fashion gold jewelry in the goldsmith's shop (his pre-school life)
2. His annual visit to his grandmother in the village of Tindican
3. His first formal educational experiences at the local village school at Kouroussa
4. The ceremony of circumcision or initiation into manhood
5. His years of study at the Ecole Technique at Conakry.

Using the author's description of his father at work in his shop as the point of departure for the study of the novel, the teacher prepares a few study questions to be used as guides for the students. These may be used also as questions for class discussion at the next class session at the discretion of the teacher.

Using the five divisions enumerated above as the bases for his teaching unit, the teacher assigns the first two chapters (twenty pages) to be read. The two chapters describe the goldsmith at work and the child's interest and admiration
for this father's skill as a craftsman. Before giving each student a copy of the study questions, the teacher explains:

"Pour lundi, lisez le premier et le deuxième chapitres du roman. En lisant ces chapitres, cherchez les réponses aux questions suivantes:

1. Qu'est le narrateur du roman?
2. Quel âge avait-il au commencement du roman?
3. Quel était le métier de son père?
4. Qu'est-ce que le griot faisait à l'atelier?
5. Quel était le petit animal qui entrait tous les jours dans l'atelier?
6. Qu'est-ce que l'enfant pensait du métier de son père?
7. Où était la case de son père? Comment était-elle?
8. L'enfant, pourquoi n'avait-il pas tué le petit animal qui entrait souvent dans l'atelier?
9. Qui a dansé la "douga" et pourquoi?

In seven of the nine questions the verb(s) is in the imperfect or pluperfect tense. In answering these seven questions the student will be forced into using the imperfect tense. This assignment is both a stimulus to reading the chapters indicated and also a review drill in manipulating the imperfect tense. Consequently, in the first class period the teacher can quickly involve the student in an audiolingual experience based on the chapters read.

Although the students are engaged in an activity designed to improve their reading comprehension in French, they must not be allowed to neglect the aural-oral aspect of language learning. So at the beginning of the class, the teacher leads the
students in a quick warm-up substitution drill based on structures taken from the chapters read. An example of such a drill follows:

Teacher: Répétez les phrases suivantes en remplaçant le sujet par le pronom indiqué.

Modèle: J'avais peur de tout. Nous avons peur de tout.

Teacher: Je jouais près de la case. Tu.
Student: Tu jouais près de la case.
Teacher: Elle était dans l'atelier. Vous.
Student: Vous étiez dans l'atelier.
Teacher: Nous mettions le feu à la clôture. Je.
Student: Je mettais le feu à la clôture.
Teacher: On ne le tuait pas. Lui et moi.
Student: Lui et moi, nous ne le tuions pas.

This drill is done first in choral form then individually until every student has been called on at least once. If this warm-up exercise is to be an effective lead into subsequent class activities, the structures repeated should be kept short and should focus directly on that grammatical or phonological feature of the language which the teacher wishes to reinforce. The reason for selecting structures from the novel itself to be used in the warm-up drill is that it aids the students in a quick recall of the events of the chapters read while equipping them with the mechanisms to talk about the chapters studied in French during that part of the class set aside for discussion.
Classroom activities may be as diverse as the creativity of the teacher's imagination so long as they lead toward achieving either the linguistic or cultural objectives or both. However, he should be mindful of the students' ages and level of interest. Activities that are too infantile in nature may be an insult to the maturity of teenagers in senior high school. This age group is interested in questions and answers about ideologies and ways of life that differ from their own. So the teacher should be careful to plan those types of activities in the study of an autobiographical novel in French that are comparable in nature and maturity to those engaged in in an English class where a similar novel is studied.

Since the students are required to read the novel by chapters, during the class period the teacher could involve the students in giving an oral résumé of the chapters read utilizing a "chain" technique. One student begins the narration and at a given point another student takes up the thread of the story and so on until all of the highlights of each chapter have been related. In this exercise the teacher should be alert and concerned with involving every student in this activity. Therefore, he must see to it that the better students do not monopolize the narration. Every student must be made to feel that he (she) is also an essential part of the activity.

Of course for a novel, the teacher can hardly get around the regular question-and-answer exercise as a follow-up to the students extraclass reading and study, and as an evaluative
It is also in this exercise that the teacher seeks to achieve the cultural objectives of the lesson. Before involving the students in this particular activity, it will be appropriate to play selected recorded segments of the story to aid the students in recalling the highlights of the chapter(s) read and to give them practice in listening to sustained narration in French. While they listen the teacher makes notes of all of the cultural items that he will need to explain and illustrate further.

In Chapters 1 and 2, the principal event is the goldsmith at work in his shop turning gold ore into radiant objects of jewelry. Since the goldsmith is virtually unknown to the average American adult or youth, the teacher makes certain that the quasi-sacred quality of this work does not escape the students.

1. Au début du premier chapitre, où était l'enfant?
2. Où était la mère de l'enfant?
3. L'enfant, que faisait-il près de sa case?
4. Quelle est la relation entre le serpent et le Père de l'enfant?
5. Chez l'enfant, qui était chef de famille? (Here the teacher explains the concept of the extended family in African culture. This he can do very easily on the chalkboard using a branched tree design.)
6. Pourquoi ne tue-t-il pas le serpent? (The teacher Seizes upon this opportunity to enlarge upon the earlier definition of the totem in African culture.)
7. Qui est venu demander au père de transformer de l'or en bijou?
8. Qui a accompagné cette femme?
9. Le griot, que faisait-il? (Once again the teacher elaborates upon the role of the griot. This is necessary since the griot has no counterpart in American culture and since he is so popular in African life and culture.)

10. L'artisan, que faut-il faire avant qu'il commence à travailler l'or?

The foregoing questions inform the students about certain traditions, customs and beliefs that undergird African life. They do not shed any light on the intra-family relationship or give any information about the type of people who were the parents of Camara. Yet one cannot read the novel without realizing there is a distinct difference between the mother and father of Camara. Since Camara as seen in the novel is the same age as many of the students who will be reading the work, a closer look at this family may prove very enlightening. After reading the early chapters of the novel, an interesting activity is to ask the students to write a list of adjectives that they associate with the mother and father. Some of these they will be able to find used in the novel itself in describing the two parents. But the alert and discerning student will come up with others.

Characteristics of Camara's Parents

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From this activity the students could move to examining the
two parents' attitude and understanding of the importance of education, of the influences of France in Guinea, of life in a large metropolitan city, the significance and real value of certain tribal ceremonies and customs. Each parent approaches each of these life situations differently. So as the family lives through each one the students will get a chance to compare his own family life with Camara's. But at the same time, there will be those things that contrast in the African family and the American family. Obviously, the students will readily observe the contrasts. However, in drawing comparisons and contrasts, the teacher must be careful to see that no inference of the superiority of one way of life over the other be made. The objective must always be to understand and to learn more about the life and culture of Africa or of the West Indies. It must always be given the same dignity of presentation and treatment accorded the study of the life and culture in France.

Depending on the students' level of language mastery and the teacher's extent of interest in examining in greater detail various events of Camara's life that give additional information about African life, the teacher may choose to do a type of "lecture commentée" using the author's description of one or two of the memorable events. Perhaps one of the most famous passages in L"Enfant noir is found in the second chapter in which Camara describes his father in the process of fashioning gold into jewelry. It takes the form of a ceremony at the end of which a real creation is achieved. As
a "lecture commentée" the teacher may choose to examine the entire chapter or he may select the following excerpt:

De tous les travaux que mon père exécutait dans l'atelier, il n'y en avait point qui me passionnât davantage que celui de l'or; il n'y en avait pas non plus de plus noble ni qui requît plus de doigté; et puis ce travail était chaque fois comme une fête, c'était une vraie fête qui interrompait la monotonie des jours...

Il prenait la marmite en terre glaise réservée à la fusion de l'or et y versait la poudre; puis il recouvrait l'or avec du charbon de bois pulvérisé, un charbon qu'on obtenait par l'emploi d'essences spécialement dures; enfin il posait sur le tout un gros morceau de charbon du même bois.

Sur un signe de mon père, les apprentis mettaient en mouvement les deux soufflets en peau de mouton, posés à même le sol de part et d'autre de la forge et reliés à celle-ci par des conduits de terre. Pour l'heure, l'un et l'autre pesaient avec force sur les branloires, et la flamme de la forge se dressait, devenait une chose vivante, un génie vif et impitoyable.

Mon père alors, avec ses pinces longues, saisissait la marmite et la posait sur la flamme.

Du coup, tout travail cessait quasiment dans l'atelier; on ne doit en effet, durant tout le temps que l'or fond puis refroidit, travailler ni le cuivre ni l'aluminium à proximité de crainte qu'il ne vienne à tomber dans le récipient quelque parcelle de ces métaux sans noblesse...

Quelles paroles mon père pouvait-il bien formuler? Je ne sais pas; je ne sais pas exactement; rien ne m'a été communiqué de ces paroles. Mais qu'eussent-elles été, sinon des incantations? N'était-ce pas les génies du feu et de l'or, du feu et du vent, du vent soufflé par les tuyères, du feu né du vent, de l'or marié avec le feu, qu'il invoquait alors; n'était-ce pas leur aide et leur amitié, et leurs épousailles qu'il appelait? Oui, ces génies-là presque certainement, qui sont parmi les fondamentaux et qui étaient également nécessaires à la fusion.

L'opération qui se poursuivait sous mes yeux n'était une simple fusion d'or qu'en apparence; c'était une fusion d'or, assurément c'était cela, mais c'était bien autre chose encore; une opération magique que les génies pouvaient accorder ou refuser; et c'est pourquoi, autour de mon père, il y avait ce silence absolu et cette attente anxieuse. Et parce qu'il y avait ce silence et cette attente, je comprenais, bien que je ne fusse qu'un enfant, qu'il n'y a point de travail qui dépasse celui de l'or. J'attendais une fête, j'étais venu
assister à une fête, et c'en était très réellement une, mais qui avait des prolongements. Ces prolongements, je ne les comprenais pas tous, je n'avais pas l'âge de les comprendre tous; néanmoins je les soupçonnais en considérant l'attention comme religieuse que tous mettaient à observer la marche du mélange dans la marmite.

Quand enfin l'or entrait en fusion, j'eusse crié, et peut-être eussions-nous tous crié, si l'interdit ne nous eût défiendu d'élever la voix; je tressaillais, et tous tressaillaient en regardant mon père remuer la pâte encore lourde, où le charbon de bois achevait de se consumer. La seconde fusion suivait rapidement; l'or à présent avait la fluidité de l'eau. Les génies n'avaient point boudé à l'opération...

Il m'est arrivé de penser que tout ce travail de fusion, mon père l'eût aussi bien confié à l'un ou l'autre de ses aides: ceux-ci ne manquaient pas d'expérience; cent fois ils avaient assisté à ces mêmes préparatifs et ils eussent certainement mené la fusion à bonne fin. Mais je l'ai dit; mon père remuait les lèvres! Ces paroles que nous n'entendions pas, ces paroles secrètes, ces incantations qu'il adressait à ce que nous ne devions, à ce que nous ne pouvions ni voir ni entendre, c'était là l'essentiel. L'adjuration des génies du feu, du vent, de l'or, et la conjuration des mauvais esprits, cette science, mon père l'avait seul, et c'est pourquoi, seul aussi, il conduisait tout.

If students are to achieve real audiolingual skills in French, they must be provided with well-planned opportunities for progressive development of the desired skills. These opportunities should be easy enough to be handled properly, yet difficult enough to be challenging. They should be varied in nature and content but should always conform to the general objectives of the course and to the specific objectives of the particular lesson being taught. Hence the passage above may be studied from the point of view of grammar and syntax, or vocabulary, or from the cultural point of view. Regardless of the vantage point from which the teacher may choose to approach a detailed study of the excerpt, he will invariably have to focus some attention on the author's
use of language. It will be his task, however, to decide how much attention and on what particular features he will concentrate. At the high school level, this activity should not become an "explication de texte." The students' attention should be focused on language as a vehicle of expression of what one observed, experienced and appreciated. Therefore, the teacher will find it more beneficial for his students and, perhaps, more interesting to emphasize complete structural descriptions. For example structures such as: (De tous les travaux que mon père exécutait)

1. Il n'y en avait point qui me passionât davantage que celui de l'or.

2. Il n'y en avait pas non plus de plus noble.

To give the student practice in using such structures in expressing a superlative idea, the teacher may develop a drill in which the student substitutes in example number 1 a different verb and in example number 2 a different adjective.

1. Il n'y en avait point qui me contentât davantage que celui de l'or. flattât rajeunît excitât ennuyât

2. Il n'y en avait pas non plus de plus noble. digné important efficace sérieux satisfaisant

This and similar practice equip the students to manipulate structures in individual conversation, narration, composition, etc., which they will be required to do or may do voluntarily
in subsequent learning and performance activities.

It would be tragic if in doing a "lecture commentée" like this one, the students do not have the opportunity of listening to it read, preferably by a native speaker of French. The intensity and emotional attachment with which Laye describes his father perform his vocational ritual of blending the necessary elements into the compound to be later shaped into a brilliant creation will be lost to the second, third, or fourth level student. The suspense that reigns in the shop during the final and critical stages of the creation can be portrayed more effectively through the oral rendition of the passage. Being of an oral literary tradition, *L'Enfant noir*, lends itself magnificently to an exciting listening experience if told as that of a story.

**Evaluation**

The kind of evaluation used should emanate from the overall goals for studying the novel and should coincide with the approach used in teaching each phase of the work. Since the teacher established both linguistic and cultural goals, he will have to plan his evaluation to embrace both sets. To evaluate the linguistic component of the overall goals, the teacher may do either or several of the following:

1. Prepare a test designed to measure the student's understanding of the imperfect and pluperfect tenses in French.

2. Prepare a list of selected vocabulary items
encountered in the novel and ask the student to (1) write a short definition for each, and (2) use the word in a sentence.

3. Ask the student to write or give orally a brief summary of the novel. If an oral summary is required, it should be done in the language laboratory and each student's rendition recorded. The teacher may wish to have the student write the summary first, pass it in to him for corrections, and then record it. Thus he can evaluate the student's oral and written manipulation of the language.

To evaluate the cultural component of the overall goals the following suggestions are offered:

1. Ask student to write his impression of the novel. What especially interested him about Camara's early life?

2. Ask student to prepare a character sketch of Camara's mother and father.

3. Ask student to assess the author's attitude toward France and the French.

4. Ask student to show how the author views change in African life and culture.

As a final word, it will suffice to point out that Afro-French novels include novels written by both French-speaking Africans and West Indians. Following the African tradition, novelists of Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana have, via their works of fiction, carved for themselves an
honored niche in the world of French letters. Jacques Roumain, Pierre and Phillippe Toby - Marcellin, and J. B. Cineas are among the most outstanding ones.

In their novels the West Indian writers (especially the Haitians) turned to neither Africa nor France for the contents of their works. In their quest for identity and the preservation of their native culture, these writers turned to the rural Haitian populace, the "ti-negres," for material for their literary works. Like its African counterpart, the contemporary Haitian novel, le roman paysan, is also a thesis novel. It condemns the exploitation of the weak by the strong, racial and class prejudice and discrimination, and institutionalized religion, especially Catholicism. In their socio-political message they champion the cause of the poor and down-trodden and attempt to point the way to the eradication of all evils that plague their country from within and from without. As a buffer to becoming Black Frenchmen, they glorify the tradition, customs, and even the language (Creole) of the rural natives. They are concerned with the welfare of the masses as a way of improving the economic, social, and political lot of all their compatriots, thus assuring for them physical and spiritual freedom and well being.

Teaching The Afro-French Play

If one accepts the idea that dramatic representations have their roots in the day-to-day existence of a people, then, the theater in Africa is as old as African civilization
Part of an oral tradition, African drama before the advent of colonialism was passed from one generation to the other by word of mouth. Here again the village griot played a very significant role, because very often he was the sole narrator - actor in the drama. In his book on the Negro-African theater, Traoré describes the composition of the traditional African theater thus:

Comment s'est constitué le théâtre traditionnel? D'emprunts à la tradition. Cette tradition tribale ou nationale a ses dépositaires attitrés: les griots qui perpétuent aux fêtes, le souvenir des héros. Ils font office de récitateurs pour populariser des récits héroïques...

(How is the traditional theater formed? Of borrowings from tradition. This tribal or national tradition has it appointed agents: the griots who on festive occasions perpetuate the memory of the heroes. They act as reciters for the purpose of popularizing heroic tales.)

The traditional African theater was truly a mirror of daily life. It served a utilitarian need for the community. Its function was first and foremost a social one. With religion playing a dominant role in African life, it is to be expected that African drama would be influenced by it. In fact, at its inception, African drama was intricately interwoven with religious ritual as Traoré points out in the following words:

Cet art dont les racines affectivement ont prises avec la terre d'Afrique, est en liaison avec le paysan, la famille et les cultes, ayant pour but d'assurer la vitalité de la communauté.

(This art whose roots have affectively taken to the African soil, is in union with the peasant, the family, and the cults, having for its purpose to guarantee the vitality of the community.)

African drama has evolved from the oral tradition of the folk to its present written stage—that is to say from the recitation of the village griot to a creative work by a single author. In its transition it has of necessity lost some of its folk characteristics, but not all of them. Because it is basically an oral art, the African playwright has been able to maintain a stronger link with his native tradition and folklore than the poet or the novelist. By means of drama, the African brings together in a single composition literature, music, singing and dancing.

The development of African drama has not been without difficulties. Its principal obstacle was the resistance of the European missionaries. Because it was closely linked to the native religious cults, the christian missionaries, at first, made a deliberate attempt to destroy every semblance of a theater in French-speaking Africa. Failing in their efforts the "African missions" changed their approach and attempted to utilize the theater as bastions of propaganda for the purpose of converting the Africans to christianity thus making it easier to assimilate them to European culture and values.
Hence the plays of such French masters as Labiche, Courteline and Molière were presented throughout francophone Africa with systematic regularity and were warmly received by the educated African.

The first manifestation of an authentic Afro-French theater, in the modern sense of that term, originated at the W. Ponty School located in Dakar, Senegal during the school year 1932-1933 with a play written and presented by a group of Dahomean students. Each year thereafter the W. Ponty School sponsored an arts festival in which it highlighted the history and folklore of Black Africa. The fame of this theatrical group soon spread beyond Senegal to France. So in August 1937, a group of students from the W. Ponty School presented two African plays at the Champs-Elysées Theater. About their performance a French critic wrote:

...Et aujourd'hui, c'est une compagnie d'élèves-instituteurs qui nous font sentir le charme authentique et la directe vérité de leur monde africain. Il ne s'agit pas d'exotisme pour nous; ni d'initiation européenne pour eux. Dans une synthèse de danses et de chants, de musique et de littérature, un art dramatique s'éveille qui procède de leur pays et du nôtre, de notre langue et de la leur.18

(And today, it is a company of student-teachers who make us feel the authentic charm and the straight truth about their African world. It is neither a question of exoticism for us nor a European initiation for them. In a synthesis of dance, of songs, of music, and of literature, a dramatic art awakes which emanates from their country and from ours, from

18 Ibid., p. 51.
In considering African drama from the point of view of the esthetic, the teacher should be cognizant of the fact that the esthetic in Black Africa is first and foremost utility. As Litto expresses it:

The arts have always been an integral part of African society. They have not existed for their own sake or as essentially decorative elements, as in the West, but rather for the sake of man and society. As a result African critics place great emphasis on the functional worth of an art object: how is the play 'good' or appropriate for the present social situation of our people?19

To this degree, the African play may be considered a type of social document as well as a literary creation. The African play—wright seeks to enlarge his setting to include the participation of a large number of people—a community. Therefore, the village square often serves as the locale for the action of the play. This use of the village as the decor in African drama is regarded as a medium for involving actively the largest number of people possible to provide the population with a picture of the many ramifications of life.

Perhaps the best description of the village as "mise en scène" of African drama is that given by Traoré, in the following passage:

En Afrique noire le lieu préféré pour ce genre de spectacle est la place du village. Nous avons dit que la place du village s'appelle 'féré' en manding; en valaf elle se nomme 'pent' qui signifie non seulement un emplacement à ciel ouvert, mais une assemblée et évoque un point de ralliement.

En effet, la place du village, pôle d'attraction, est l'endroit, où se rencontrent toutes les nouvelles du pays. Généralement situé au centre du village avec pour seul décor des arbres au pied desquels reposent quelques canaris rituels, ce lieu inspire la confiance et la paix; c'est là que les paroles des vieillards tombent comme des sentences et pénètrent la conscience des jeunes; c'est là aussi que s'annoncent les mariages et les circoncisions; mais c'est là surtout que la conscience collective vient s'exprimer à travers le théâtre. La place symbolise le village et le pays tout entier. Cela explique sans doute le fait que les Africains n'ont jamais éprouvé le besoin de construire un édifice pour des représentations dramatiques. L'édifice sera un apport de la colonisation.

(In Black Africa the preferred place for this genre of performance is the village square. We have said that the village square is called "féré" in Manding*; in Valaf* it is called "pent" which means not only an open-air site, but a gathering and [it] calls to mind a rallying place. The village square, the center of attraction, is indeed where all the news of the country is heard. Generally located in the center of the village having for [its] single setting some trees at the base of which lie some ritual canaries, this place inspires confidence and peace; it is here that the words of the elders fall like judgments and penetrate the consciences of the young; it is here also that marriages and circumcisions are announced; but it is here especially that the collective conscience achieves expression by way of the theater. The square symbolizes the village and the entire country. No doubt this explains the fact that Africans have never experienced a need to construct a building for

20 Bakary Traoré, p. 77.
*West African tribal languages.
dramatic performances. A building would be a symbol of colonialism.

To fully understand and appreciate African drama, one has to be aware of the significance of the various props and dramatic conventions employed by African playwrights. Like the village square, the costumes, the masks, the plot, the dialogue and the divisions (acts) have a meaning peculiar to African culture. Costumes in the traditional African theater must correspond to the exact reproduction of a particular action and to the precise ritualistic requirements. Any straying from these demands for the proper costumes would render the drama ineffective, because the actor is seeking to perpetuate ancestral customs and practices through his behavior and dress. The masks worn by the actors may symbolize either a myth, a legend or an individual. Since the mask is the incarnation of a divinity, an individual, or an animal when worn by the actor, it becomes both an active participant in the action and a decorative object. It takes on character and meaning. Therefore, its role must be viewed as more than decoration. The principal purpose of the setting of the play is to contribute directly to its theatrical efficacy by providing authenticity to the literary text. For example, certain traditional plays are performed during the daylight hours because the sun is an important part of the setting just as it is in everyday African life.

Organization of African drama has much in common with classical Greek Theater. The traditional African play
ignored divisions in the accepted theatrical sense of that word. In order to render smooth transition from one scene to the other, traditional African drama utilizes a choir similar to that employed in Greek drama or a single person who serves as a one-man choir of sorts. In his play, *Une Saison au Congo*, Aimé Césaire employs "le joueur de sanza" to move the action forward. Dia Cissé in his play *La Mort du Damel* employs a combination griot-diviner who announces in song that which is to come to pass.

**Scène II**

(Entrent Fodé et Latsoukabé)


FODE (jouant): Thailaw, Tiédos, Babolos! Ecoutez bien, car ceux-là seuls entendront qui sauront bien écouter (il joue). Que voulez-vous donc savoir? (Une pause.) Ah! que vous impose cet homme?...

Un grand va mourir, un grand est mort... (Une pause.) Là-bas, un peuple se lamente. Entendez-vous, entendez-vous leurs plaintes? Un voyageur est à vos portes, un messager sinistre. (Il joue.) Ah! un grand va partir, un grand va vous quitter.

de son fils! Du sang! encore du sang' (Musique.) Voilà!

SAMBA KEUL: Par la ceinture de mon père, il me tarde de te briser la tête! Ah! quoi! Prendre de pauvres rêves pour la réalité, hâter sa renommée avec des mensonges! Et surtout et surtout trouver des gens assez naïfs pour te croire! Du sang! mais un guerrier en voit tous les jours, qu'il vienne de soi ou de l'adversaire. J'entends naturellement un brave guerrier et non un lâche.

Allons, lève-toi, fils d'esclave! ramasse ta boîte à musique et garde-toi de te trouver au bout de ma lance, si tu ne veux pas que ta cervelle abreuve la terre, truite imposteur! Ah! Ah! Ah! (Rire féroce prolongé.)

FODE: Thialaw, ma musique ne dit rien qui ne soit la vérité. Pour peu que tu vives encore, tu comprendras, Thialaw, tu comprendras le malheur qui accourt vers le Cayor. J'ai dit!

SAMBA KEUL: Fils d'esclave! Ote-ici de ma vue, ou, par la ceinture de père...

LATSOUKABE: Du calme, du calme, Thialaw, il ne sert à rien de s'élever contre son destin. Pensez-bien: un grand va mourir!

FODE: Hier, au milieu de la nuit, des corbeaux, au-dessus de ma tête, par trois fois, ont jeté leurs cris. Mon fils Moussa, un innocent encore pur de toute souillure, m'a dit: Père, père, ils volent à ta gauche. Messager sinistre. Un grand malheur,
un grand va mourir.

Thialaw Samba Keul, veux-tu que je chante une mélopée de mon pays? Tu comprendras ce que dit la musique; la musique parle à ceux qui savent la comprendre.

Mon pays est loin, bien loin, là où deux rivières se réunissent pour enfanter le fleuve qui coule jusqu'à N'Dar. Qu'il est beau mon village! Le fleuve y est calme et limpide. Des ajoncs, des nénuphars s'épanouissent le long de ses rives pittoresques. Jadis, tous les ans, après la grande inondation, quand le mil a bien poussé, toutes nos femmes, jeunes et vieilles, s'en vont en procession vers ces berges herbeuses... car c'est là qu'elles trouvent l'hippopotame, le totem du village, dispensateur d'abondance et de calme bonheur.

Sous la clarté de la pleine lune, tout habillées de blanc, une calebasse sur la tête, elles s'en viennent en longue file et ce qu'elles chantent est bien doux au cœur de l'hippopotame.

(Chant)

Le dieu du fleuve les sent venir, bientôt il émerge sa grosse, très grosse tête, et les petits enfants, frissonnant d'angoisse, s'accrochent aux pagnes de leurs mères. La joie dilate ses grosses lèvres...Car elle est bien la chanson de nos femmes.

(Chant)

La chanson s'enfle et se perd loin, très loin dans la
savane. Toutes les bêtes écoutent, charmées, la musique des hommes. L'hippopotame s'ébroue dans l'eau, plonge, émerge, plonge encore et émerge à nouveau, et bientôt, immobile, recueilli, il fixe la longue file qui l'abreuve de chansons.

(Chant)

Les calebasses se vident dans le fleuve, lait caillé, gâteaux de mil, noix de kola, couscous, toutes les belles choses qui nous viennent de la terre. La chanson, grandit démesurément, clame la gratitude de l'homme à son Dieu, la joie des belles récoltes, l'espérance en un avenir encore plus prospère.

(Chant)

Un jour, écoute bien Samba Keul, un jour, un guerrier téméraire, las peut-être de la vie, conçoit l'idée monstrueuse de tuer l'hippopotame. Ecoute bien, Thialaw Samba Keul. Pendant vingt jours et vingt nuits, il mûrit son projet infâme. Pour lui, toutes les chansons sont bien bêtes, car, Thialaw, il était fermé à la musique.

Donc, à l'heure où les femmes en longue file s'en vont vers le fleuve, l'homme, caché dans les herbes, son fusil en main, guettait, guettait l'hippopotame.

Et les femmes chantent et les bêtes, charmées, écoutent la musique...et tout à coup, l'hippopotame émerge sa tête... et l'homme fait feu!
(Chant)

Pleurez! Pleurez, femmes de mon pays! Un téméraire vous a ravi l'abondance et le calme bonheur... Car, depuis ce temps, pas une herbe ne pousse le long de ces rives désolées.

Pleurez vos enfants dispersés, dispersés dans le vaste monde; pleurez vos époux malheureux, mais aussi le téméraire qui mourut, misérable, le soir de son crime.

Thialaw Samba Keul, que ceci te serve d'exemple. Il faut savoir comprendre la musique.

Since there was no written script, the originators of a play or even the actors themselves (largely village griots) were free to improvise and very often they did so to the fullest extent.

The modern African play has adopted the European convention of dividing the action of the play into distinct acts. However, the number of people involved has not been drastically reduced. The play still has many of its traditional vestiges. On this point, Traoré writes:

Quant à l'organisation des pièces, la part écrite a pris le pas sur la part improvisée. Le chant continue cependant à tenir une place importante, aussi bien dans les tragédies que dans les comédies. Actes, scènes et intermèdes apparaissent inspirés des modèles européens.

(Concerning the organization of the plays, the written script has taken precedence over improvisation. However, the song continues to hold an important place in tragedies as well as

\[21\] Ibid., p. 80.
in comedies. Acts, scenes, and interludes appear inspired from European models.)

The modern African theater has undergone other changes. Today actors may or may not include the mask as part of their costumes, and unlike the traditional theater, actresses are not excluded from the stage. The creators of modern African theater, though anxious to preserve their heritage and unique features, zealously strive to avoid the exotic and the strange especially if such features can be easily misinterpreted. The bitter fruits of colonialism have made them extremely cautious on this point.

The best way to teach a play is to consider it for what it is, drama. It involves both speech and action. African drama combines dialogue, music, singing, and dancing; and springs from the heart of community living. Usually it is a tableau of communal life, dynamic and colorful.

Since most Afro-French plays are at least three-act plays, the teacher will find it possible to do justice to only a very small number of them in the course of the school year. If he plans to have his students perform the play in public, he will, in all probability, find it necessary to limit the number to a single play. Regardless of the approach he selects, he will have to choose the play. He should make his choice early in the year, far enough in advance in order to give students time to (1) secure copies of the play itself,
(2) to read it, and (3) to listen to the recording of it in the language laboratory. For every play studied in the secondary school French class a recorded version should be available in the laboratory and students should be required to work with it, as they study the written script. After all, most plays are written to be performed and the audio phase of each is as important as the action phase. In the language class it is more important. If a commercial recording of the play is not available, the teacher could arrange for some native speakers of French or Americans whose audio-lingual proficiency in French ranges from good to excellent to transcribe the play in its entirety. Of course, the teacher will have to choose persons with good speaking voices and some acquaintance with dramatic art. For the teacher who does not plan to present a public performance of a play, there are other interesting and pedagogically sound activities in which his pupils may participate. A recording of the full play can be presented in class and students may be assigned character parts which they act out in pantomime following the individual voices on the tape. The classroom furniture can be rearranged to give the idea of a stage and the presentation may take the form of a telecast minus the commercials. To participate effectively in this activity, the student will have to have studied the play carefully in the language laboratory. The effectiveness of their acting will depend on their aural comprehension of the utterances
of the voices on tape. If the play is a long one, two class periods may be necessary to complete this activity. To add variety to this experience and to increase student interest, the roles of leading characters may be played by different students in each of the different acts, involving a greater number of the students in classroom participation.

If there is a dramatic club at the school, the teacher may choose to work with the drama teacher in staging an African play in full theatrical regalia for the edification and enjoyment of the total school community. Certainly, this necessitates much work and many hours of planning, rehearsing and coaching; but if entered into enthusiastically and worked at assiduously, the results will more than justify the efforts and time expended.

Whatever approach the teacher decides to use, advanced preparation for classroom presentation should be carefully made. The students should be lead to see both the linguistic and cultural significance of the dramatic work. Therefore, any classroom activity utilized should be succeeded by a well-planned follow-up activity or evaluation. In the follow-up activity, the teacher will want to ascertain how well the students have understood the text, as dramatic art and as a cultural document. The follow-up activity can be written or oral or both. However, it should always be given in the target language. It may consist of a true-and-false quiz, a matching exercise, a completion drill, or a list of questions to which the student supplies the answers. Each of these
follow-up activities can be done very effectively using the overhead projector. The following plan for teaching an Afro-French play should serve as a guide for the classroom teacher.

Lesson Plan

Title: La mort du Damel
Author: Dia Cissé (Senegal)
Materials: Adequate copies of the play and a taped recording of it for duplications for lab use

A. Linguistic:
   1. To improve listening comprehension of French when spoken in dramatic exchange.
   2. To study the "tu" form of the imperative.

B. Cultural:
   1. To acquaint the student with the characterization of an Afro-French play.
   2. To study the role of the griot-diviner in traditional African life.
   3. To study the conflict between the westernized African and the tradition-bound African.

Activities:

The dialogue of this play makes extensive use of the imperative employing the second person singular (Tu) form. Students usually encounter difficulty with this form. Therefore, this play affords the teacher an opportunity to give his students additional practice within a contextual framework. Using structures from the play itself, the teacher can develop
several types of re-inforcement activities, the simplest being a repetition drill:

Teacher: Répétez après-moi.
Teacher: Interroge Fodé.

Teacher: Lève-toi, fils d'esclave.

Teacher: Assieds-toi, Fodé.

Teacher: Prends ta guitare et dis-nous ce que tu vois.

Teacher: Ote-toi de ma vue.

Teacher: Rêmasse ta boîte à musique.

Or the teacher leads the class in a cued response drill in which he makes a statement in the indicative and the students express the same idea in the imperative. Example:

Teacher: Tu nous dis des nouvelles.
Student: Dis-nous des nouvelles.

Teacher: Tu appelles Fodé maintenant.
Student: Appelle Fodé maintenant.

Teacher: Tu te lèves tout de suite.
Student: Lève-toi tout de suite.

Teacher: Tu ramasses ta guitare.
Student: Ramasse ta guitare.

Teacher: Tu écoutes ce qu'il dit.
Student: Ecoute ce qu'il dit.

Similar exercises should also be given the students for writing practice. Requiring the students to write their answers will give them practice in making the change in the spelling of the verb when using it in the imperative as compared with its use in the indicative.

La Mort de Damel raises many questions which contemporary Africa is struggling to answer. But before moving to this phase of study, the teacher will do well to engage the class in a close look at the characters, organization, and movement in the play. In plays by Afro-French writers, language is important. There is very little action on stage. The characters enter and tell what has happened or what will happen. So the audience is forced to follow the verbal exchange more closely than in an American drama. Because of this, the teacher must make certain that his students are ready to engage in the study of a play of this kind. This type of play will not be completely new to the students. Many of them will have read a Shakespearan drama in which language holds sway over action and will have developed some sophistication in reading classical drama.

In La Mort de Damel, Cissé introduces the reader to traditional African titles of royalty. In attempting to understand the relationship of the Damel of Cayor to the young ruler of Saloum, the student discovers something about the complex system of allegiances which characterized traditional African royalty. Hence the question how does this tradition
of royal succession resemble that in western culture?

In order that the students may make the correct culture discoveries, the teacher prepares a series of key statements which will give the skeleton of the plot and the relationship of the characters one to the other. Each student is given a copy of these as a study guide. These statements will serve not only to clarify the students' thinking about the contents of the play but will facilitate their discussing it in class. Some statements that the teacher may use are:

1. Thialaw Samba Keul était prince du Cayor. 
et frère du Damel du Cayor.
2. Le mot "Damel" veut dire "roi".
3. Le mot "Bour" veut dire un "roi" qui est vieux.
4. Le Bour Saloum est très vieux et très malade.
5. Fodé est le sorcier du village qui sait prédire des événements.
6. Fodé annonce que le Bour Saloum va mourir bientôt.
7. Latsoukabé est le griot du cour royale.
8. Le Bour Saloum meurt.
10. Samba Keul, jaloux de son frère, le Damel du Cayor, fait éclater la guerre entre le roi du Saloum et celui du Cayor.
11. Le roi du Saloum tue le Damel du Cayor, son père.

From these statements the teacher can move smoothly and quickly to other aspects of African culture as presented
in the play. The role of the griot is clearly shown in the character, Latsoukabé, and the role of the diviner in Fodé.

SAMBA LAOBE: .......Latsoukabé, griot du Damel que dit mon père?


LATSOUKABE: Fodé. Cet homme est merveilleux, il est de la race des Bambarras en qui la nature se plaît à verser une seconde vue. Interroge Fodé, Thialaw; pour lui, il fera parler les esprits qui guident nos destins d'hommes. (Act I, Scene I)

FODÈ: (jouant sa guitare) Un grand va mourir, un grand est mort...(une pause) Là-bas, un peuple se lamente. Entendez-vous, entendez-vous leur plaintes? Un voyageur est à vos partes, un messager sinistre. (Il joue.)...

(Act I, Scene II)

Using these and other appropriate passages from the play, the teacher designs those experiences which serve to further enlighten his students on certain features of African customs and traditions. Building on his definition of the griot communicated earlier to his students, the teacher formulates a
set of questions whose answers will lead to discovering additional information about this very important character in traditional Africa.

1. Pourquoi Latsoukabé a-t-il fait venir Fodé, le sorcier?
2. Est-ce que Fodé est venu?
3. Quel instrument de musique avait-il?
4. Quand il parlait que faisait-il avec son instrument de musique?
5. Est-ce qu'il a apporté de bonnes nouvelles?
6. Comment a-t-il communiqué ses nouvelles aux autres?
7. Fodé était plus qu'un griot, n'est-ce pas? Comment le savez-vous?
8. Comment s'appelait la tribu de Fodé?
9. Que pensez-vous du rôle du griot dans la vie africaine?
10. Aux Etats-Unis avons-nous des griots?

As a follow-up activity, the students are asked to organize themselves into small groups. Each group writes a narrative monologue on some school or community event. The group elects one person as their group griot who in typical African style "sings" their narrative to the class. Students enjoy doing this because it gives them a chance to get in a few remarks about the principal, fellow schoolmates, and even the French teacher. On the other hand, it enables them to better grasp the important slot that the griot fills in African life and culture.
What are some of the concerns to which Cissé addresses himself in the play? One concern is the conflict between the westernized African's outlook and that of the traditional African. In *La Mort du Damel*, Samba Keul rejects the "wisdom" of the griot-diviner on war in favor of guns and ammunition. He tells the royal griot, Latsoukabé:

> Qu'ai-je besoin de tes conseils? Mon fusil me suffit, Latsoukabé. Pour moi, il n'y a qu'une seule voix et celle-là que toujours je veux entendre.

After hearing Fodé's announcement, Samba Keul exclaims:

> ...Prendre de pauvres rêves pour la réalité, bâtir des gens assez naïfs pour te croire.

The warlike temper of Samba Keul leads him to insult publicly the people of Saloum, the kingdom of his dead uncle. This leads to strife between the two people and eventually to war between the Damel Macodou, the father, and Samba Laobé, the son. The Damel is slain and the Saloum warriors are victorious. It is in these scenes of strife that Cissé shows many of the tribal loyalties which beset African societies today: (1) the struggle to free oneself from the predictions of the griot-diviner, (2) destructiveness of inter-tribal feuds, (3) the powerful bastion of tradition against change.

There is one aspect of this play that is usually interesting to American high school students. It is the instrument used to summon the warriors to hear the sad news of the defeat of the Damel, the father of Samba Laobé. He says:
Sakhévar, prends ton tam tam de guerre et annonce au peuple du Saloum que le Bour a besoin de voir tous ses guerriers...

The students get a first hand indication of the use of the drum in African culture for purposes other than dancing or religious ceremonies. They learn that the drum is also an instrument of communication which antedates by hundreds of years the Morse Code and, certainly, the telephone. Since there are works written by Africans in which communication by drum is thoroughly described, the teacher may wish to allow those students (usually boys) who express a desire to learn more about this art to do independent study on this topic and report to the class later.

Although Afro-French plays are less numerous than plays by English-speaking Africans, the number is steadily being increased and their dramatic quality improved.

African drama treats a large variety of themes among which are the following:

1. Conflict between the old (tribal) and the new (urbanized) way of life
2. Alienation upon the return to the place of birth
3. Rejection and acceptance of oneself and others
4. Conflict between Blacks and whites (Europeans)
5. Symbolic use of folklore
6. Struggle against superstition and ignorance in African society

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22 Frederic M. Litto, p. XIII.
7. Problem of sterility
8. Materialism
9. Corruption in government
10. Proverbs and stories of the past against which new ideas and values of the nation may be measured
11. Feminine emancipation
12. Conflict

Afro-French Drama of the Caribbean Islands

The scourge of centuries of slavery and human servitude destroyed much of the traditional African theatrical heritage in the Caribbean Islands. The African theatrical tradition that remained became closely linked with Voudou. Under the shield of voudou worship, the French-speaking West Indians carried on both their religious and theatrical heritage. However, the popular or traditional theater was never able to flourish as in Africa because of the stiff opposition to the practice of voudou exercised by the Catholic Church and the Government. Voudou was soon relegated to its fairly clandestine existence of today. This situation allowed for rapid growth of a more erudite theater patterned after that of France. Hence, except for the plays of Aimé Césaire, most of the theatrical productions of the Caribbean Islands are hardly distinguishable from plays from metropolitan France. Written in clear and concise French, they are African or West Indian only in so far as they treat life in a family or community whose constituency is predominantly black.
In recent years, there has developed in the French West Indies a strong interest in the re-establishment of the ancestral links between Africans and West Indians. The plays of Aimé Césaire of Martinique are examples of this so-called new "théâtre engagé." Even so, African scholars are now questioning the efficacity of the utilization of traditional western drama as a vehicle of expression for the problems of Blacks in Africa, especially those of colonialism. The West Indian play reflects perhaps more than any other literary form, the high level of acculturation and assimilation among francophone black populations in the western world.

Teaching The Essay on African Life and Culture

Usually books on methods and techniques of teaching literature do not include, among the genres discussed, the essay. As a literary composition, the essay affords the students another means of approach to studying African life and culture. Inasmuch as it is analytical and interpretative in its treatment of subject matter, it acquaints the student with a style of writing and discussion that differs in many respects from the other literary genres studied. It is not because of its difference, however, that the essay is included here and should be included in the study of Afro-French literature and culture. It is largely because of the contents and the force and clarity of language usage that the essay has been included for discussion here.
The term "essay" as used in this discussion embraces also the literary excerpt which, though a part of a larger work, often appears as a single essay. They are numerous and contain a wealth of information which the teacher and students will welcome. They are well written and, therefore, make excellent models for practice in oral and written composition. The teacher must realize that very few of his students will become poets, novelists, or playwrights in English or in French. But almost all will have many occasions to read essays in French and some will be called upon to write essays in French. So there is no better time to introduce them to this literary form than in the French class via the study of African literature of French expression.

Another important value to be obtained from studying the essay is the significance of organization and of marshalling one's facts and thoughts to form a logical and coherent exposition. Not only are the facts that the essayist utilizes important but his mode of expression—his manipulation of language—must not go unnoticed. It is on the level of language usage that the classroom teacher of French should first focus attention. Therefore, the same care in selecting other literary genres to be studied in class should be exercised in the selection of essays. Prior to choosing an essay to be used in class, the teacher may find it helpful to ask the following questions about it: (1) Are the contents of the essay of interest to American high school students? (2)
Will they provide the reader with authentically sound information? (3) Is the level of language usage above the audio-lingual proficiency level of the class? (4) Is the essay too long? Each one of these questions must be answered satisfactorily by the teacher before the essay is selected for use in the classroom. The purpose for using the essay in a French class is to foster improved audio-lingual proficiency in French. Therefore, all materials chosen for use must be chosen with an eye toward achieving this goal.

By nature of its contents and style, the essay lends itself to many teaching strategies. On the linguistic level, depending on the level of the class, it is excellent for teaching vocabulary building since the essayist uses few figures of speech. In the main, the language of the essay is concrete and unemotional. The terms utilized are those utilized and understood by the speech community of which the essayist is a part. So the students learn lexical items and their meaning in a realistic contextual framework. The essay provides also an excellent medium for teaching the use of symbols of punctuation in French writing. Though punctuation symbols are virtually the same in English and in French, they are used differently in each language. Since grammar books generally omit this aspect of language study, students in advanced classes need to be made aware of the difference in the use of punctuation symbols and what they indicate to the reader if they are ever to achieve a high level of writing and reading proficiency. To use a simple example as
Illustration, one may consider the difference in punctuation in the following sentences:

French: Car, en Afrique noire, on est du sang et du clan de sa mère.

English: For in Black Africa, one is of the blood and clan of his mother.

French: Voici une mère qui revoit, après plusieurs années, son fils: un étudiant de retour de France.

English: Here is a mother who, after many years, sees again her son, a student returned from France.

Though slight, the changes in the system of punctuation can lead the student to make erroneous interpretations of what he reads. Because of the fact that it contains an abundance of sentences written in the normal word order, the essay is a valuable model for studying punctuation usage in French.

No doubt the principal importance of including the essay in a guide to the introduction of Afro-French literature and culture in the secondary school is the wealth of concrete facts and information they provide to the reader. Many of the beliefs, customs, traditions and ceremonies briefly mentioned or alluded to in more creative expression are analyzed and interpreted in the essay in lucid and concrete language. It contains a wealth of facts, information, and interpretations that aid the student in achieving a broader knowledge and deeper understanding of those objects, customs, beliefs and traditions that undergird African culture. It constitutes a very necessary adjunct toward the fostering of a deeper appreciation for African folkways and mores. Human nature being what it is, one appreciates only that which he
understands well.

An example of an essay-excerpt that is culturally relevant is provided below as a part of this discussion. It discusses a topic that has interest for both students and adults. It gives information on, if not answers to, many of the questions on the rearing of children prior to school age. Its contents will provide information that will aid the student in reading more intelligently poems like Guy Tirolien's "Prière d'un petit enfant nègre", or Camara Laye's novel, L'Enfant noir or Bernard Dadié's novel Climbié and numerous other works in which the author focuses on the preadolescent years of the African child.

Essay

L'Education d'un Enfant Africain

En Afrique noire, la maman ne sèvre jamais d'elle même son enfant. A ce dernier de se sevrer lui-même, quand bon lui plaira. Le jour, elle le porte, à califourchon sur l'une de ses hanches ou le fourre dans une hotte qu'elle attache à son dos par des brassières. Elle procède, chargée de la sorte aux multiples travaux domestiques que les traditions ont départies à son sexe, tandis que son marmot, happant le sein ballant à porte de ses menottes, se gave de lait maternel et finit par s'endormir bouche bée, le nez

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23 The title was supplied by the writer of this thesis, and not by the author of the larger work from which it is taken.
crotté de muscosités où s'engluent meliphones et moucherons.

L'enfant jouit, dans sa petite enfance, d'une liberté excessive. Il est généralement admis que la maman n'a pas le droit de le corriger. Ce droit, de même que celui de la réprimande, n'appartient qu'au père, qui n'en use d'ailleurs que rarement, sauf quand l'enfant commet des vols, ou tout autre acte blâmable, aux dépends de la communauté tribale. On traite alors cet enfant comme un malade, un possédé qu'il faut guérir être le pire des crimes aux yeux de la plupart des tribus de l'immense Afrique noire.

L'enfant croît ainsi au jour le jour, apprenant, grâce à l'enseignement que lui dispensent son entourage et les sociétés secrètes dont la rude poigne le rendra tôt ou tard taillable et corvéable à merci, à lire au grand livre de la nature, qui a pour signets là faune et la flore qui l'habitent, et pour ponctuation les cris, les bruits et les odeurs signalétiques que le vent bavard emprunte à cette flore et à cette faune, afin de les prodiguer aux immensités où l'arbre ancre ses racines, et où pullule tantôt l'herbe, tantôt le sable.

Devinettes, proverbes, fables et légendes participent à cette éducation morale. L'âme noire s'y découvre à peu près tout entière, avec son ingénuité et ses terreurs, son esprit de ruse et son fatalisme, sa soif d'échapper à elle-même et son désir de vivre si possible en paix avec tout ce qui l'entoure, son idéoréalisme et sa sagesse. (Extrait du Livre de la Sagesse nègre)
Lesson Plan

Title: L'Education d'un Enfant Africain
Author: René Maran

Instructional Aids: Adequate copies of the essay. Photographs of an African woman carrying her baby on her back, and one of her nursing her baby.

Objectives:

Linguistic

1. To teach lexical items that have to do with motherhood and child care.

Cultural

1. To acquaint the student with one African's account of child rearing in Africa.
2. To compare pre-school training of the child in traditional Africa with that of an American child.

Activities:

When the essay is distributed to the members of the class to be studied for the first time, the teacher should read it aloud to the students while they follow reading silently. This will provide the correct pronunciation for those words in the essay which the students are meeting for the first time. These he will include in his list of lexical items to be taught.

Although the teacher may prepare a list of the lexical items that he plans to teach, he presents the words to the
class in a complete sentence. Even when he defines the new word, he is careful to follow the definition with a structure in which the word is used. As an effective learning device it is preferable to keep the structures as short as possible so that they may be drilled orally. For example, the teacher's guide for this activity may follow the format below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexical Item</th>
<th>Definition and Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. sevrer</td>
<td>= La mère ne donne plus le sein à l'enfant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= Aux Etats-Unis la mère ne donne plus le biberon à l'enfant (au bébé).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>La mère africaine ne sèvre jamais l'enfant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. à califourchon</td>
<td>= (Here a visual is used to portray the meaning of this lexical item.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>![Visual of a man on a horse]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L'homme est à califourchon sur le dos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. fourrer</td>
<td>= envelopper, couvrir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elle fourre les bijoux dans son sac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. bée</td>
<td>= ouverte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Il nous regarde bouche bée. (Teacher demonstrates with facial expression.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. moucheron</td>
<td>= une petite mouche. Un petit insecte qui pique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>En été il y a beaucoup de moucherons dans le parc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Marmot = un petit enfant, un gosse
Tandis que la mère attend, son marmot dort tranquillement sur le dos

As often as is convenient, the teacher should take the illustrative structure from the essay itself. However, this is not always possible and the teacher will find it necessary to construct his own illustrative examples.

To provide a single example is not enough to fix the meaning of a lexical item in the student's memory to a degree that he will be able to use it independently later. The teacher must provide additional patterns for drill. Using the words introduced earlier, the teacher prepares the following drill:

Teacher: La mère américaine sèvre tôt son enfant. Vous.
Student: Vous sevrez tôt votre enfant.
Teacher: Je sèvrez tôt mon enfant. Nous.
Student: Nous sevrerons tôt notre enfant.
Teacher: Elle sèvre tôt son enfant. Les femmes.
Student: Les femmes sevrent tôt leurs enfants.

Changing to a question and answer drill using the same lexical item, the drill continues thus:

Teacher: Qui sèvre tôt l'enfant?
Student: La mère américaine sevre tôt l'enfant.
Teacher: Est-ce que la mère africaine sèvre tôt son enfant?
Student: Non, la mère africaine ne sèvre pas tôt son enfant.
Teacher: Que fait-on quand on sèvre l'enfant?
Student: On ne donne plus le biberon à l'enfant;
Teacher: Que fait-on quand on sèvre le bébé africain?
Student: On ne donne plus le sein au bébé.

By means of a series of rapid drills like this one, the teacher is able to teach the meaning and use of the new words and also to evaluate how well the students have grasped what has been taught. For such exercises, however, it behooves the teacher to select essays that contain a limited number of new words. Word drill over an extended period can become boring to the student. Besides, the teacher must recognize the fact that equipping his students with an increased vocabulary is a means toward an end. It must never become the end in itself. The end is liberated speaking, writing, and reading in the target language.

To read with understanding this essay is to learn something about the way the African child is reared during his pre-school years. The essay is factual and the approach to the topic of discussion is forthright. So the first cultural objective of the lesson is met when the student reads and understands the essay. The concern of the teacher at this point is that of evaluating how thoroughly the student has understood what he has read and how effectively he can talk about it in French.

One evaluative technique applicable here is to direct the class in making a comparison between the early childhood
of an American youth and that of the African youth as described in the essay. The questions to be used in this activity are so constructed to focus on the two ways of rearing children as co-equal rather than as one being better than the other. Having been introduced to the new lexical items that appear in the essay and having been adequately drilled in their manipulation in a sentence, the students should be ready to enter into a discussion of the contents of the essay without hesitation.

Always the teacher should be certain of the way he will begin each activity. This should be well planned and should begin with enthusiasm. He should never begin a discussion with the question, "Que pensez-vous de l'essai que vous avez lu?" or "Aimez-vous l'essai que vous avez lu?" Questions like these are too broad and usually do not serve to generate interest on the part of the students. If the teacher must begin with a question, he should select one that can be answered concisely. A correct answer to a question motivates the students to want to participate in the classroom activity. Audiolingual participation is what the teacher wants and must get, if he is to succeed in aiding his students to learn.

To stimulate interest and also to aid the students in recalling certain information given in the essay, the teacher selects photographs (in color if possible) showing the following:
1. An African mother with infant on her back

2. An African mother nursing her baby
   (A statuette may be used if one is available.)

3. Story-telling scène in an African village or some other traditional learning activities engaged in by African children.

Using an opaque projector the teacher shows these at the appropriate time during the discussion. A class engaged in such an activity would sound as follows:

Teacher: Nous avons lu un essai qui parle de .......? Looking for someone to complete his sentence.

Student: Qui parle d'un enfant africain.

Teacher: Très bien, Marie. Cet enfant est-il jeune?

Student: Oui, il est très jeune.

Teacher: Oui, c'est un bébé n'est-ce pas? (Flashing the picture of the mother nursing her child on the screen the teacher continues.) Regardez l'écran. Que voyez-vous?

Student: Je vois une mère et un bébé.

Teacher: Que fait la mère?

Student: Elle alimente son bébé.

Teacher: Comment alimente-elle son bébé?

Student: Elle alimente le bébé en lui donnant le sein.

Teacher: La mère américaine, comment alimente-elle son bébé?

Student: Elle alimente son bébé en lui donnant le biberon.

Teacher: (Changing the picture to one showing a mother with her child on her back.) Nous voyons encore la mère et son enfant n'est-ce pas? Où est l'enfant maintenant?
Student: Il est sur le dos de sa mère.

Teacher: Regardez plus près. Le bébé est attaché au dos de sa mère par des brassières. Regardez le visage de la mère. Est-ce qu'elle a l'air content?

Student: Oui, elle a l'air bien content.

Teacher: Regardez le bébé. A-t-il l'air content?

Student: Oui, il dort.

Teacher: Devinez. Quel âge a-t-il?

Student: Il a douze mois.

Student: Il a dix-huit mois.

Teacher: Eh bien. Disons qu'il a dix-huit mois. Est-ce que la mère l'alimente toujours?

Student: Oui, elle l'alimente toujours.

Teacher: Comment le savez-vous, Robert?

Student: Dans l'essai on dit que la mère africaine ne sèvre jamais son enfant.

Teacher: Donc, qui le sèvre?

Student: Il se sèvre lui-même.

Teacher: Très bien. Qui sèvre le bébé américain?

Student: La mère le sèvre.

Teacher: Susie, voulez-vous nous dire comment la mère américaine sèvre-t-elle son bébé?

Student: Après quelques mois, la mère ne donne plus le biberon. Elle lui donne de la nourriture qu'elle achète en supermarché. Maintenant le bébé boit du lait de son petit verre.

Utilizing the remaining visuals the teacher involves the students in as much talk as possible coaxing them to employ the newly learned lexical items where applicable.

At the end of such an activity the teacher should give
a brief summary of what was contained in the essay. When applicable, he should relate the facts and information gained from the essay to similar information derived from other literary and cultural works studied. It is the duty of the teacher to guide the student in synthesizing his knowledge of African life and culture even though gleaned from different sources. He must be led to realize that all he learns is an integral part of the whole and greater world of Africa.
CHAPTER VII

SELECTING AND INTEGRATING AFRO-FRENCH TEACHING MATERIALS IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The teacher must now declare his authority over materials...

Nelson Brooks

For the classroom teacher who has not taken formal courses in Afro-French literature and culture, the task of choosing suitable literary works for the secondary school curriculum can be baffling indeed. Moreover, the task is being made more difficult by the steady increase in the number of publications by black authors that are beginning to appear in textbook catalogues. Unless the teacher can learn something about each publication relative to its appropriateness for high school use, he will still be at a disadvantage in his effort to secure teaching materials that will be effective tools of learning. One of the goals of this particular guide to introducing Afro-French literature and culture in the secondary school curriculum is to offer the classroom teacher help in choosing some good teaching materials for use in the classroom. Needless to say that the contents of these pages are suggestive rather than
exhaustive.

Since no "graded" readers of Afro-French literature have yet appeared, the job of deciding which selections or works to introduce in the classroom becomes chiefly the responsibility of the teacher. What points should he consider in performing this task? First, he should take into consideration the background, mental age, and the religious and psychological orientation of the students who will study the selections. As an earlier chapter of this study has emphasized, African life and culture differ from that in the United States in many ways. Africans are more candid in their discussion of all segments of living than are Americans. They use far fewer euphemisms in their works than American authors. They view life as an open book to be read, discussed, understood and accepted for what it is. Sex and sexual behavior is written about with candor and clarity. In most African cultures, adolescents are introduced to the role and purpose of the sexual organs at an early age. Therefore, the author has no need to camouflage it under circuitous language in his writings. In his book, *Facing Mount Kenya*, Jomo Kenyatta explains that "the physical operation on the genital organs of both sexes is regarded as a starting point for various activities in the tribal organization."¹ But such forthright presentation of the subject of sex and sexual behavior may be

misinterpreted and misleading to many American high school teenagers. The classroom teacher should be fully aware of this fact and heed it in making his selection of reading materials for the classroom.

In their eagerness to reject being assimilated to European culture where they may end up being "black faces with white masks", some African authors go to great lengths in establishing via their work their ethnic identity. Some do this by a very generous use of their tribal tongue or their native patois. Writings of this type should not be chosen for use, especially in initial efforts of introducing Afro-French culture in the high school French class. Perhaps these works should be reserved for use in more advanced courses.

Even where the African author writes in standard French, the teacher should examine carefully the vocabulary, sentence structure, and literary style before putting it on the student's reading list. In some Afro-French selections many of the key words derive from the African environment and do not appear in the average French dictionary available to students, thus making it impossible for the student to comprehend satisfactorily what he is supposed to be reading. Besides, much of contemporary Afro-French poetry uses a rather elliptic sentence structure which gives it a hermetic quality, and only the "initiated" surrealist scholar can fully understand it.*

This places the burden squarely on the teacher. Since

*It is written in the surrealist tradition.
he is thoroughly acquainted with the goals and objectives of the foreign language program in his school, and with the psychological sensitivity and language readiness of his students, only he, as teacher, can decide what literary selections will be appropriate for his class. Nevertheless, it will pay to bear in mind that selections that are heavy laden with philosophical abstractions, mythological allusions, and satirical innuendos should be avoided. The foregoing qualities, in no way, detract from the excellence and richness of the works themselves. To the contrary, they enhance their literary worth. However, second and third level French students will hardly be prepared to respond to them in a very positive manner.

A fourth concern of the classroom teacher in choosing Afro-French teaching materials is the length and level of grammatical difficulty of the work chosen. Choices should be limited to short and medium length selections. Long works (in excess of 250 pages for novels) should be reserved for advanced courses. Poems of more than a page in length should seldom be used. The length of the particular poem should not discourage the student from attempting to memorize it if he chooses or is required to do so by the teacher. The rule to follow is to proceed from the easy to the difficult by a gradual process. There must be this type of progression in order to foster growth and mastery in manipulating the foreign language and in improving linguistic comprehension and cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. The teacher
should always bear in mind that his goal in the second and third level French class is not to train creative writers or literary critics but to introduce American high school students to some literary and cultural contributions of French-speaking Blacks with the hope of inspiring a greater interest, appreciation in and tolerance of things and peoples of Africa and of African extraction.

A fifth concern of the teacher in choosing Afro-French teaching materials should be their possible impact and influence in building bridges of understanding, tolerance, and goodwill across racial and cultural boundaries. To choose works that show all French-speaking Blacks as leading a life of "sweetness and light" is as vicious an attack on these peoples as to select works that present only the opposite view. A balanced selection consisting of authors from as many francophone African cultures as possible will give a more realistic and wholesome picture of today's Africa thus strengthening the bonds of understanding and acceptance.

The final concern of the classroom teacher is the availability of the materials selected. Can he get them? The student must have free access to all materials to be used in class. This means that he should be able to buy his own or to be provided with them by other means. To select materials without assurance that they will be available in sufficient quantities for effective classroom use is meaningless as far as the student is concerned. It is the teacher's concern and
responsibility to locate sources from which all materials to be used in the classroom or entered on the library shelves may be secured. These sources should be for both printed and audio and visual materials. Frequent perusal of journals and periodicals that treat African life and culture is an excellent means for locating teaching materials and instructional aids, such as films, slides, and filmstrips. Outlets for pedagogical materials on Africa and African culture are becoming progressively more numerous in the United States making the cost of renting or purchase of them less prohibitive.

To date American sources from which Afro-French teaching materials are available are extremely limited. But with the increased interest in Africa and with the inclusion of courses in African history, art, music and dance in the curriculum of the American secondary school and college, publishers of textbooks and classroom materials are beginning to make materials by and about Africans available in steadily increasing quantities. A few publishers have employed a full staff of specialists and native Africans for the purpose of developing classroom materials treating the literature, civilization, history, and culture of francophone Africa. On such publishing firm is the Center for Curriculum Development, Incorporated, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The American subsidiary of the Librairie Hachette, The French Book Guild, 36 West 61st Street, N.Y., N.Y., 10023, includes in its catalogue as a part of "documents
géographiques" a series of slides on the geography, topography, and the historical, economic, and industrial evolution of Africa. The Lorraine Music Company, Incorporated, 23-80 Forty-eighth Street, Long Island City, New York, 11103, lists in the latest issue of its catalogue an album, "Poésie de la négritude" which contains poems by the French-speaking black poet, Leon G. Damas of French Guiana. The Robert J. Brady Company, 130 Que Street, N. E., Washington, D. C., 20002, has produced an excellent filmstrip on African history and artifacts. Though the commentary to this filmstrip is in English, its contents give an excellent visual introduction to Africa's historical and cultural development. In lieu of using the English commentary, the teacher can prepare his own in French.

Although the number of American publishing firms making classroom materials on French-speaking Africa available for public consumption is gradually increasing, that number is still much too small. For a wide selection of materials from which to choose, the classroom teacher still has to seek help from publishers from outside of the United States, principally in France. The best sources are still the following:

Editions Présence Africaine
25 bis, rue des Ecoles
Paris Ve, France

Editions Seghers
118, rue de Vaugirard
Paris VI, France
Among the best sources for keeping informed about the availability of publications and classroom materials by black authors, African and non-African, are the following journals:

- Présence Africaine, Cultural Review of the Negro World, 42, rue Descartes, Paris (V)
- CLA Journal, official organ of the College Language Association, Morgan College, Baltimore, Maryland
- Black Academy Review, Black Academy Press, 3296 Main Street, Buffalo, New York
- African Arts/Arts d'afrique, African Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles, California
- Phylon, Review of Race and Culture, Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia
- Crisis, official organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

A Plan for Integrating Francophone Literature and Culture in the Secondary School Curriculum

Any attempt to integrate Afro-French literature and culture in the French curriculum of the secondary school ought to be an integral part of the official guide for teaching French in the high school. The plan presented below is an illustration of how one school system is attempting this task. The plan presented here is that currently being used in the Atlanta Public Schools. This plan is not presented here as the ultimate in curriculum plans for putting Afro-French culture into the high school French classes. It is presented as an example of how one school system is going about
integrating the literature and culture of francophone Africa in the overall French curriculum as a mechanism for cultural enlightenment and an added dimension to the study and learning of the French language.

Inasmuch as Atlanta has not yet perfected a system-wide long sequence, beginning with FLES and continuing through junior high, the plan was designed basically for the grades ten through twelve. Because of the high mobility of students in the Atlanta schools and because of the unevenness of their previous training in French, it was agreed that it would be best to begin integrating Afro-French literary and cultural enrichment in level two, intermediate French. The Atlanta school system divides the school-year into three quarters of roughly three months each. Hence a level corresponds to one year of three quarters. French 201 means second level or intermediate French of the first quarter, French 202 indicates the same level but for the second quarter and French 203 means level two, third quarter.

According to the curriculum guide for French, at the beginning of level two, first the student will have spent one school year studying French in a class in which the teacher followed the guide rather closely. So one can suppose that the students are able to do the following in French:

To manipulate orally French phonology (pronunciation, intonation, etc.)

To answer simple questions in French
To recognize visually sentences mastered orally
To read sentences mastered orally
To reproduce in writing sentences mastered orally
To manipulate verbs in the simple tenses and in the passé composé
To locate on a map or a globe France and neighboring countries
To locate on a map the major cities of France
To name several geographical differences that exist within France, e.g., mountains, plateaus, rivers, etc.

Relying on the philosophy that an introduction to literature and culture of francophone Africa and the West Indies should be an integral part of the teaching and learning of French, the designers of this phase of the curriculum guide (for whom the writer served as consultant) expanded the objectives of each level to include this new area of study. For example, for French 201 the designers added the following objective: "To locate on a globe or a map of the world those countries and territories of Africa and of the West Indies where French is spoken. Also, in outlining suggested learning experiences for all subsequent levels, they have been careful to follow the developmental flow of language skills as presented in the guide.

Description of Levels, Classroom Materials and Aids

In the beginning level (French 201), a map or globe

^Paraphrased from the Atlanta Public Schools French Guide, Atlanta, Georgia, 1968.
that clearly shows the political divisions of Africa and of the West Indies is a necessity. If at all possible these should be in French rather than in English. Maps of Africa written in French are available from the French Book Guild of New York, the address of which is given in an earlier paragraph. Other valuable visuals include posters, post cards, slides, filmstrips, films, and topographical features of Africa and West Indies. Of course, such a collection of materials will be useless unless the teacher has ready access to the proper projectors to use in creating an effective learning experience in the classroom. The old cliché that one picture is worth a thousand words takes on renewed significance here.

Concerning specific titles of commercially prepared visuals suitable for this phase of study of Afro-French literature and culture, there are very few that can be supplied here. Perhaps the two best collections available today are: (1) the Hachette series of slides, "Le Relief de l'Afrique" distributed through the French Book Guild, and (2) the Sheldon and Leona Cole filmstrip series, "African History, Artifacts and Culture", developed and distributed by the Robert J. Brady Company. Both the slides and the filmstrip series are broken down into special topics which makes them applicable for classroom use. They facilitate immensely the teacher's progression from the broad outline of the geography of Africa as a continent to a study of individual countries, and later to the major cities, rivers, lakes,
mountains, etc., of each one. The fact that the commentary that accompanies the filmstrip is in English should not render it unfit for use in a French class. After studying the teacher's manual, the teacher can easily prepare his own in French. By doing so, he can adapt it to the level of comprehension of his students—rendering it more functional for classroom use. Also, the teacher needs to remind himself of the primary objective of this phase of study, to impart to his students basic knowledge on the geography and topography of French-speaking Africa and the West Indies so that they may enter more fully the world of these francophone peoples via the literature and culture to be studied later. But the teacher as a teacher of French is obliged to impart this information in the target language. Therefore special attention must be given to planning, presentation, and reinforcement. These were discussed in Chapter VI of this study.

In level two of the second quarter (French 202), the teacher guides the class in learning about the life and peoples of Africa and of the West Indies. There is not one single Africa. Africa is many different tribes, languages, religions, and customs. At this level, the class is led to participate in audiolingual activities which will introduce them to the basic institutions and activities in African life and culture—the family, the home, the community, music and dance, sports, religious and traditional rites and ceremonies.

In level two, the third quarter (French 203), the teacher
introduces the class to literary materials. Poems, short narrative, folktales, songs that correspond in level of language difficulty to the students' level of achievement in French are selected for classroom use. These materials should be chosen with the students in mind rather than because they may have a particular appeal to the teacher. They should reinforce what the students have studied in terms of French grammar, syntax, and vocabulary as well as illustrate further certain aspects of African geography, peoples, life and culture studied in the two preceding levels.

At the end of the second year of language study, the students should have a good foundation in French grammar and syntax, and should be capable of manipulating orally and in writing a number of grammatical structures in the target language with great facility. According to the curriculum guide the Atlanta school students at the end of level two should have a working knowledge of all the simple tenses including the present subjunctive. Thus in level three the teacher is able to guide his class in exploring more deeply certain selected features of African life and culture through a more in-depth study of the writings of black francophone authors, while simultaneously providing excellent language learning experiences which correspond to the developmental flow of the four language skills. On this level the teacher has a wide range of appropriate materials from which he can choose.

On level four, the Atlanta curriculum guide for French lists six areas of French life and culture in which students
may do extensive study and investigation. These areas appear as follows:

French 401, The Arts in France Today
French 402, Teen-agers and Teen-age Life in France Today
French 403, French Politics and Professions
French 404, The New France
French 405, The French Approach to Life
French 406, France: A Film Introduction

Believing that students entering French, level four, will want to study in greater depth selected aspects of the life and culture of French-speaking African peoples, those revising the curriculum guide for French added to the above list the following areas of study:

French 407, Traditional African Life
French 408, Life in the French West Indies
French 409, Thoughts and Expressions of Today's French-Speaking Blacks

In order to present a more graphic picture of the levels of French study as they exist in the Atlanta public schools the writer has prepared the outline in which he shows the four levels of French study and suggested literary and cultural selections for use on each level. The writer wishes to emphasize here that every selection listed below has not actually been used in the classroom. Since on the first three levels of study, Afro-French Life and Culture was integrated into the regular daily course work, the number of selections utilized
in any one quarter had to be limited. So the outline below includes: (1) those selections that have been utilized and (2) those, though not actually utilized, that have been studied and evaluated for their suitability of content, level of difficulty, and their manageability in terms of length for use on a given level in conformity with the goals, objectives, and anticipated achievements stated in the curriculum guide for French. The outline gives the author, and title of each selection and the title of the work in which it is found. A list of references giving complete information on the selections utilized concludes the outline.

French 201, 202, 203

Cultural Objective: To acquaint the students with the geography, topography, peoples, institutions, and traditions of those countries and territories of Africa and of the West Indies where French is the official language.

Poems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>René Maran</td>
<td>Pays Chauds</td>
<td>Les Belles Images</td>
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<td>Promenade</td>
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<td>Printemps</td>
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<td>Grandes Vacances</td>
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<td>Chagrins d'enfant</td>
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<td>Lamps</td>
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<td>Guy Tirolien</td>
<td>Prière d'un petit enfant nègre</td>
<td>Anthologie de la Poésie nègre et malgache</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elolongué E.Yonda</td>
<td>La Tortue</td>
<td>Kamerun! Kamerun!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fritz Pawelzik</td>
<td>Prière de l'écolier</td>
<td>Je lance ma joie vers le ciel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
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<td>Léopold S. Senghor</td>
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<td>Anthologie de la poésie nègre et malgache</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leon G. Damas</td>
<td>Un clochard m'a demandé dix sous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georges Sylvain</td>
<td>Le Ramier et Les Petits Oiseaux</td>
<td>Anthologie d'un siècle de poésie haitienne</td>
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<td><strong>Contes</strong></td>
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<td>Maximilien Quenum</td>
<td>Comment le Feu fut introduit chez nous</td>
<td>Les Plus beaux écrits de l'Union Française</td>
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<td>Joseph Brahim Seid</td>
<td>L'Eclipse de la lune</td>
<td>Présence africaine</td>
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<td>Bernard Dadié</td>
<td>La Légende Baoulé</td>
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<td>Birago Diop</td>
<td>Maman Caïman</td>
<td>Contes d'Amadou-Koumba</td>
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<td><strong>African Songs and Music</strong></td>
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<td>French 301, 302, 303</td>
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**Cultural Objective:** To aid students in acquiring a broad acquaintance with Afro-French life and culture through the reading of more advanced level materials and participating in advanced language learning intraclass and extraclass activities.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Léopold S. Senghor</td>
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<td>Femme noire</td>
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<td>Nuit de Sine</td>
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<td>Récits Guadeloupéens</td>
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<td>Sembène, Ousmane</td>
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<td>Presence Africaine</td>
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<td>René Maran</td>
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**African Songs and Music (If available)**

**French 407 Traditional African Life**

**Cultural Objective:** To aid the student in acquiring a deeper knowledge and appreciation of African life and culture.

**Excerpts and Essays**

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Camara Laye  Rite of Circumcision  L'Enfant noir
AKé Loba  Au Lycée  Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir
Paul Lomain Tshibamba  Nuit de Sabbat  Ngando
Maximilien Quenum  La Condition de la Femme Africaine  Afrique noire, rencontre avec l'occident

Poems
Leopold S. Senghor  Elégie de Circoncis  Anthologie de la poésie nègre et malgache

Contes
Francis Bebey  Embarras & Cie, Nouvelles et poèmes

Novels
Camara Laye  L'Enfant noir
Ferdinand Oyono  La Vie de Boy
Bernard Dadié  Climbie

French 408, Life in The French West Indies
Cultural Objective: To aid the student in acquiring an in-depth knowledge and empathy for the civilization and culture of the French West Indians.

Poems

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Le Tambour

Panorama de la Poésie Haïtienne

Chants d'Haïti

Léon Laleau
Vaudou
Sacrifice

Anthologie de la poésie nègre et malgache

Jacques Roumain
Bois d'Èbène

Essays
Felix Courtois
La Femme Haïtienne
Appendix B

Novels
Ph.-Toby & Pierre Marcelin
Canapé-vert
Le Crayon de Dieu

Jacques Roumain
Gouverneurs de la rosée

Haitian Proverbs

Caribbean Songs & Music (If available)

French 409, Thoughts and Expressions of Today's French-Speaking Blacks

Cultural Objective: To introduce the student to the contemporary French-speaking Blacks—their hopes, achievements, and frustrations as seen and expressed by them.

Essays and Excerpts

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Jacques Rabémananjara
La Terre Malgache

Poems

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<td>Léon G. Damas</td>
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Fiction

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Plays

Seydou Badian  La Mort de Chaka
Aimé Césaire  Une Saison au Congo

List of References


Rabémanjara, Jacques. *Nationalisme et Problèmes malgaches*.


*Les Plus Beaux Ecrits de l'Union Française.*

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I have given to this book so much of whatever time I have because I feel, and I hope, that if I honestly and fully tell my life's account, read objectively it might prove to be a testimony of some social value.

Malcolm X

This study focused on the positive features of introducing Afro-French literature and culture into the American secondary school curriculum. It highlights the enriched knowledge and understanding that will accrue to the students and teacher from this proposed curriculum innovation. Peoples of African ancestry both in Continental Africa and in the Western Hemisphere have a rich heritage. Today much information about this rich historical past and challenging present is available to the French class in the average American high school via literary works written by Africans and descendants of Africans. A plan for bringing this information and enrichment into the high school classroom has been presented in the foregoing pages. Based on the organization of its contents, this plan divides itself into two major parts. The first five chapters established
a need for the study and information that are indispensable
to the teaching of Afro-French literature and culture. The
second part, consisting of chapters six and seven, described
methods, techniques, instructional aids and classroom ac-
tivities applicable to the teaching of the various genres
of literature at the high school level. The emphasis in
this part of the study was an application of the teacher's
knowledge and skill to the teaching of African literature
and culture.

Though the writer has clearly shown in the preceding
chapters that including Afro-French literature and culture
in the secondary school curriculum is both feasible
and timely, and will prove to be a rewarding educational
experience for both students and teacher, he did not fail
to point out the pitfalls in such an undertaking. The old
saying, "if it is new it must be better," does not always
hold true in a classroom situation. Thus when introducing
the study of Afro-French literature and culture into its
curriculum, the school should take extreme care in as-
certaining: (1) that this phase of French study form an
integral part of the French curriculum, (2) that it be
presented as a legitimate language learning experience and
not as a safari into some exotic Tarzan-like world, (3)
that the teaching personnel be adequately informed on African
civilization and culture, past and present or that it
be willing to engage in some form of in-service training
in this discipline prior to attempting to teach African literature in any form. To place such a delicate but important task in the hands of the ill-informed or the uninformed would be to guarantee its failure. So in an effort to obviate such a danger, the writer included in this guide to the teaching of Afro-French literature and culture a section or chapter which presents in condensed form information on those aspects of African civilization and culture about which the teacher should be informed. Assuming the position that culture is the totality of the beliefs, institutions, customs, and traditions shared by a people, the teacher is presented with a concise introduction to the organization and significance of certain principal African societal institutions, beliefs, and customs, i.e., the family, birth, death, courtship, marriage, magic, religion. If literature is indeed the mirror of civilization, then African literature will of necessity mirror African civilization as lived and witnessed by Africans. Therefore in order to do it justice in the classroom the teacher will need more than a superficial knowledge of African civilization and culture.

The writer has also provided the teacher with a rather full discussion on African music and dance as it relates to literary creative expression by Africans. These two art forms are part and parcel of African existence. They permeate, in some form, all of African life—in season of joy, sorrow,
strife, tranquility, prosperity, suffering; at religious ceremonies, at social gatherings, at work and at leisure, there is music and there is dance each one uniquely linked to the occasion or the emotion expressed in a very special way. The teacher has to know this fact and respect it in his attempt to guide young minds in a more intellectually meaningful learning experience.

The role of the myth in African life and culture needs not be feared or exaggerated by the classroom teacher, but it certainly needs to be understood by him. This study discussed for the benefit of the teacher the many different types of African myths and the various forms in which they appear in literature. Since the African's concept of reality is bound up with his utilization of the myth as a medium for communing with his environment, his literature which mirrors his deepest emotions, aspirations, realizations and successes will reflect this fact. If approached with an open mind, the teacher will find his study of African myths and their meaning most enlightening.

The concept of negritude in literary works by Black Africans need not pose an insurmountable obstacle for the American high school French teacher. But like the African myth, it, too, needs to be clearly understood and the variety of forms in which it is expressed recognized. The young Black American's eagerness to extol the virtues of
blackness is an expression of a type of negritude. Briefly stated, negritude is the black man's quest for ethnic identify. Aware of the essential contribution that knowledge and understanding of this concept could make toward rendering the study of African literature and culture a more rewarding learning experience, the writer has provided in this study an entire chapter in which he describes in much detail the origin, development, and meaning of negritude as expressed in the works of several of the more prominent black writers.

Moving from the study of background facts and information on African civilization and culture, the writer of this teaching guide presented in the second part suggestions, methods, and techniques for making African literature and culture a living experience in the classroom. Hence, he has described rather elaborately teaching plans, techniques, strategies and aids devised and used in an American secondary school French classroom. These are not all theoretical projections. Many have been used with students in a regular French class in an American public high school. They have not been included in this guide, however, as the perfect ways to teach African literature and culture in a high school classroom, but as examples of some possible ways that it can be done. The ability to effectively teach Afro-French literature in the high school is composed of the same ingredients as the ability to teach French or Spanish literature in the high school. Therefore, it is within the reach of every industrious
and alert classroom teacher, if he wants to teach it.

Stated in more succinct language, the writer in this study has done the following:

1. Established the need for including the study of Afro-French literature and culture in the curriculum of the American secondary school.

2. Presented in condensed form basic facts and information on institutions, beliefs, customs, and traditions undergirding African civilization and about which the classroom teacher should be knowledgeable.

3. Presented plans, supported by examples, for teaching several literary genres of Afro-French literature in the high school classroom.

4. Presented a list of sources, national and foreign, from which Afro-French teaching materials and aids may be secured, and guidelines for choosing them.

5. Described in detail a plan for introducing Afro-French literature and culture in the curriculum that has been adopted by a large urban school system.

Based on research done in preparing this study, visits to schools, centers of public instruction, publishing firms, conferences with state and local foreign language supervisors and French teachers, the success of an experimental project in a public high school, the writer presents the following conclusions:
1. The study of Afro-French literature and culture has relevance for the curriculum of the American secondary school.

2. The literary and cultural contributions by francophone African and Caribbean writers are of a linguistic quality and cultural value that merit the inclusion in the French curriculum of the American high school.

3. American youths need to be exposed to the "African story" as told by Africans.

4. The role of Africa in international relations is becoming increasingly more significant and can no longer be ignored by institutions engaged in preparing future adults and national leaders.

5. The study of Afro-French literature and culture will aid in erasing many of the erroneous conceptions about Africans and West Indians, about their beliefs, traditions, and customs.

6. The African and Caribbean peoples are linked to a large segment of the American population ethnically and historically, and their authors write out of experiences which their American counterparts have shared and which they understand.

7. American high school students welcome opportunities to learn about Black Africa, even in French.
8. Good teaching materials and aids on Africa and African culture are rapidly becoming available in the United States and accessible to the public school.

9. When properly introduced, the study of African literature and culture in the French class can stimulate renewed interest in learning French, especially among Black Americans.

10. The integration of African literature and culture into the French curriculum is within the possibility of every conscientiously industrious French teacher and every concerned American secondary school.

In view of the foregoing conclusions, and in view of the need for the American secondary school to move ahead toward implementing plans for including the study of Afro-French literature and culture in the French curriculum, the writer offers the following recommendations:

1. That local schools or school systems include the study of Afro-French literature and culture in their French curriculum guide.

2. That local schools or school systems cooperate with the nearest college or university that offers courses in Afro-French literature and culture in conducting in-service or summer seminars for the purpose of preparing teachers to teach African literature and culture in the high school French class.
3. That opportunities for short term study grants in a francophone African or Caribbean country be provided for teachers by the United States Government or by some other philanthropic institution or organization.

4. That the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) lend more active support in stimulating greater interest in and support for African studies, even to include organizing group flights to francophone African countries during the summer for interested teachers.


6. That national and local foreign language teachers organizations, especially AATF, use more French-speaking Africans as principal speakers and discussants at annual meetings.

7. That French classes establish pen-pals with francophone African youths similar to those that exist between French and American students.

8. That classroom teachers and foreign language supervisors team-up with publishing firms, linguists, and language specialists in producing teaching
materials and aids in French on Africa, and African life and culture.
APPENDIX A

Fig. 1.—Replica of a Coat-of-Arms used to explain the meaning of the totem in African Culture.
Fig. 2.—Replica of the Seal of the United States used to explain the significance of the totem in African Culture.
Fig. 3.—Map of Africa showing the political divisions.
APPENDIX B

KOOJLA KO

Paroles et Musique de P.M. PANGO
Chant des piroguiers de Sassandré, Côte d'Ivoire.

Adagio au départ

Soprano

FIN

Zambilé-a  Zambilé-a  Zambilé-a  Ko- djla- ko - o.
APPENDIX C

African Proverbs and Riddles

1. Celui qui veut manger fait de sa servante sa femme.
2. Quand tu appelles un chien, n'aie pas un baton à la main.
3. L'heure matinale a de l'or dans la bouche.
4. L'eau trouve toujours son niveau.
5. On ne tire pas du sang d'une pierre.
6. On ne dit pas le cause de sa chute dans un puits avant d'en être sorti.
7. Un seul désir suffit à une armée.
8. Même la vache que l'on n'aime pas, on la trait.
9. L'eau chaude n'oublie pas qu'elle a été froide.
10. La science est le tronc d'un baobab qu'une seule personne ne peut embrasser.
11. Toutes les jolies maisons ne sont pas un lieu pour passer la nuit.
12. Un léopard meurt avec ses couleurs.
13. Au bout de la patience, il y a le ciel.

Devinettes

1. Qui regarde à droit, à gauche sans voir sa soeur?  
   Réponse: L'oreille.

---

2. Ruisseau où il n'y a ni caillou, ni sable?
Résponse: Les larmes?

3. Quelle est la chose que l'on peut frapper sans lui faire des blessures?
Résponse: L'eau.

4. Lorsque ce petit homme sort de sa chambre, tout le monde le voit?
Résponse: Le soleil.
Le salaire

Diassigue-le-Caïman, raclant le sable de son ventre flasque, s'en retournait vers le marigot après avoir dormi, la journée durant, au chaud soleil, lorsqu'il entendit les femmes qui revenaient de puiser de l'eau, de récurer les calebasses, de laver le linge. Ces femmes, qui avaient certainement plus abattu de besogne avec la langue qu'avec les mains, parlaient et parlaient encore. Elles disaient, en se lamentant, que la fille du roi était tombée dans l'eau et qu'elle s'était noyée, que fort probablement, c'était même certain (une esclave l'avait affirmé), dès l'aurore, Bour-le-Roi allait assécher le marigot pour retrouver le corps de sa fille bien-aimée. Diassigue, dont le trou, à flanc de marigot, se trouvait du côté du village, était revenu sur ses pas et s'en était allé loin à l'intérieur des terres dans la nuit noire. Le lendemain, on avait, en effet, asséché le marigot, et on avait, de plus, tué tous les caïmans qui l'habitaient; et, dans le trou du plus vieux, on avait retrouvé le corps de la fille du roi.

Au milieu du jour, un enfant, qui allait chercher du bois mort, avait trouvé Diassigue-le-Caïman dans la brousse.

- Que fais-tu là, Diassigue? s'enquit l'enfant.
- Je me suis perdu, répondit le Caïman. Veux-tu me porter chez moi, Goné?
- Il n'y a plus de marigot, lui dit l'enfant.
- Porte-moi alors au fleuve, demanda Diassigue-le-Caïman.

Goné-l'enfant alla chercher une natte et des lianes, il enroula Diassigue dans la natte qu'il attacha avec les lianes, puis il la chargea sur sa tête, marcha jusqu'au soir et atteignit le fleuve. Arrivé au bord de l'eau, il déposa son fardeau, coupa les liens et déroula la natte. Diassigue lui dit alors:

- Goné, j'ai les membres tout engourdis de ce long voyage, veux-tu me mettre à l'eau, je te prie?

Goné-l'enfant marcha dans l'eau jusqu'aux genoux et il allait déposer Diassigue quand celui-ci lui demanda:

- Va jusqu'à ce que l'eau t'atteigne la ceinture, car ici je ne pourrais pas très bien nager.
Goné s'exécuta et avança jusqu'à ce que l'eau lui fût autour de la taille.

- Va encore jusqu'à la poitrine, supplia le caïman.

L'enfant alla jusqu'à ce que l'eau atteignît la poitrine.

- Tu peux bien arriver jusqu'aux épaules, maintenant.

Goné marcha jusqu'aux épaules, et Diassigue lui dit;

- Dépose-moi, maintenant.

Goné obéit; il allait s'en retourner sur la rive, lorsque le caïman lui saisit le bras.

- Wouye yayé! (O ma mère) cria l'enfant, qu'est-ce que ceci? Lâche-moi!

- Je ne te lâcherai pas, car j'ai très faim, Goné!

- Lâche-moi!

- Je ne te lâcherai pas, je n'ai rien mangé depuis deux jours et j'ai trop faim.

- Dis-moi, Diassigue, le prix d'une bonté, est-ce donc une méchanceté ou une bonté?

- Une bonne action se paie par une méchanceté et non par une bonne action.

- Maintenant, c'est moi qui suis en ton pouvoir, mais cela n'est pas vrai, tu es le seul au monde certainement à l'affirmer.

- Ah! tu le crois?

- Eh bien! Interrogeons les gens, nous saurons ce qu'ils diront.

- D'accord, accepta Diassigue, mais, s'il s'en trouve trois qui soient de mon avis, tu finiras dans mon ventre, je t'assure.

A peine finissait-il sa menace qu'arriva une vieille, très vieille vache qui venait s'abreuver. Lorsqu'elle eut fini de boire, le caïman l'appela et lui demanda:

- Nagg, toi qui es si âgée et qui possèdes la sagesse, peux-tu nous dire si le paiement d'une bonne action est une bonté ou une méchanceté?
Le prix d'une bonne action, déclara Nagg-la-Vache, c'est une méchanceté, et croyez-moi, je parle en connaissance de cause. Au temps où j'étais jeune, forte et vigoureuse, quand je rentrais du pâturage on me donnait du son et un bloc de sel, on me donnait du mil, on me lavait, on me frottait, et si Poulo, le petit berger, levait par hasard le bâton sur moi, il était sûr de recevoir à son tour des coups de son maître. Je fournis, en ce temps, beaucoup de lait et toutes les vaches et tous les taureaux de mon maître sont issus de mon sang. Maintenant, j'ai vieilli, je ne donne plus ni lait ni veau, alors on ne prend plus soin de moi, on ne me conduit plus au pâturage. A l'aube, un grand coup de bâton me fait sortir du parc et je vais toute seule chercher ma pitance. Voilà pourquoi je dis qu'une bonne action se paie par une mauvaise action.

Goné, as-tu entendu cela? demanda Diassigue-le-Caïman.

'Oui, dit l'enfant, j'ai bien entendu.

Déhanchant sa fesse maigre et tranchante comme une lame de sabre, Nagg-la-Vache s'en alla, balançant sa vieille queue rongée aux tiques, vers l'herbe pauvre de la brousse.

Survint alors Fass-le-Cheval, vieux et éthique. Il allait balayer l'eau de ses lèvres tremblantes avant de boire, lorsque le caïman l'interpella:

Fass, toi qui ce si veux et si sage, peux-tu nous dire, à cet enfant et à moi, si une bonne action se paie par une bonté ou par une méchanceté?

Certes, je le puis, affirma le vieux cheval. Une bonté se paie toujours par une mauvaise action, et j'en sais quelque chose. Ecoutez-moi tous les deux. Du temps où j'étais jeune, fougueux et plein de vigueur, j'avais, pour moi seul, trois palefreniers; j'avais, matin et soir, mon auge remplie de mil et du barbotage avec du miel souvent à toutes les heures de la journée. L'on me menait au bain tous les matins et l'on me frottait. J'avais une bride et une selle fabriquées et ornées par un cordonnier et un bijoutier maures. J'allais sur les champs de bataille et les cinq cents captifs que mon maître a pris à la guerre furent rapportés sur ma croupe. Neuf ans, j'ai porté mon maître et son butin. Maintenant que je suis devenu vieux, tout ce que l'on fait pour moi, c'est me mettre une entrave dès l'aube, et, d'un coup de bâton, on m'envoie dans la brousse chercher ma pitance.
Ayant dit, Fass-le-Cheval balaya l'écume de l'eau, but longuement puis s'en alla, gêné par son entrave, de son pas boitard et heurté.

- Goné, demanda le caïman, as-tu entendu? Maintenant, j'ai trop faim, je vais te manger.

- Non, fit l'enfant, oncle Diassigue, tu avais dit, toi-même, que tu interrogerais trois personnes. Si celle qui viendra dit la même chose que ces deux-là, tu pûras me manger, mais pas avant.

- Entendu, acquiesça, le caïman, mais je te préviens que nous n'irons pas plus loin.

Au galop, et sautillant du derrière, Leuk-le-Lièvre passait. Diassigue l'appela:

- Oncle Leuk, toi qui se le plus vieux, peux-tu nous dire qui de nous deux dit la vérité? Je déclare qu'une bonne action se paie par une méchanceté, et cet enfant déclare que le prix d'une bonne action c'est une bonté.

Leuk se frotta le menton, se gratta l'oreille, puis interrogea à son tour:

- Diassigue, mon ami, demandez-vous à l'aveugle de vous affirmer si le coton est blanc ou si le corbeau est bien noir?

- Assurément non, avoua le caïman.

- Peux-tu me dire où va l'enfant dont tu ne connais pas les parents?

- Certainement pas!

- Alors, expliquez-moi ce qui s'est passé, et je pourrai peut-être répondre à votre question sans risque de beaucoup me tromper.

- Eh bien, oncle Leuk, voici: cet enfant m'a trouvé là-bas à l'intérieur des terres, il m'a enroulé dans une natte et il m'a porté jusqu'ici. Maintenant, j'ai faim, et comme il faut bien que je mange, car je ne veux point mourir, ce serait bête de le laisser partir pour courir après une proie incertaine.

- Incontestablement, reconnut Leuk, mais si les paroles sont malades, les oreilles, elles, doivent être bien portantes, et mes oreilles, à ce que j'ai toujours, cru, sont bien portantes, ce dont je remercie le bon Dieu, car il est une de tes
paroles, frère Diassigue, qui ne me paraît pas
en bonne santé.

- Laquelle est-ce? interrogea le caïman.
- C'est lorsque tu prétends que ce bambin t'a porté
dans une natte et t'a fait venir jusqu'ici. Cela,
je ne peux le croire.
- Pourtant c'est vrai, affirma Goné-l'enfant.
- Tu es un menteur comme ceux de ta race, fit le lièvre.
- Il a dit la vérité, confirma Diassigue.
- Je ne pourrai le croire que si je le vois, douta
Leuk. Sortez de l'eau tous les deux.

L'enfant et le caïman sortirent de l'eau.

- Tu prétends que tu sa porté ce gros caïman dans
cette natte? Comment as-tu fait?
- Je l'ai enroulé dedans et j'ai ficelé la natte.
- Eh bien, je veux voir comment.

Diassigue s'affala dans la natte, que l'enfant enroula.

- Et tu l'as ficelée, as-tu dit?
- Oui!
- Ficèle-la voir.

L'enfant ficela solidement la natte.

- Et tu l'as porté sur ta tête?
- Oui, je l'ai porté sur ma tête!
- Eh bien! porte sur ta tête que je le voie.

Quand l'enfant eut soulevé natte et caïman et les
eut posés sur sa tête, Leuk-le-Lièvre lui demanda:

- Goné, tes parents sont-ils forgerons?
- Que non pas!
- Diassigue n'est donc pas ton parent? Ce n'est pas
ton totem?
- Non, pas du tout!
- Emporte donc ta charge chez toi, ton père et ta mère
et tous tes parents et leurs amis te remercieront,
puisque vous en mangez à la maison. Ainsi doivent être payés ceux qui oublient les bonnes actions.
APPENDIX E

L'Éclipse de la Lune

La discorde, la mésentente n'existent pas seulement entre les hommes. Là-haut, dans le ciel, le soleil et la lune se sont juré une imimité éternelle. Pourtant, les deux astres semblent être faits pour s'entendre: l'un et l'autre sont une sublime plénitude de la justice, l'un et l'autre dissipent les ombres; ils luisent pour l'homme, ils luisent pour les bêtes, ils luisent pour les plantes. Eternels voyageurs errants, l'un et l'autre éclairent les déserts, les forêts, les lacs et les vallons.

Il y a certes entre les deux astres une opposition de tempérament: autant le soleil est plein d'ardeur virile, autant il chauffe, vivifie et consume, autant la lune est d'une douceur maternelle; elle caresse, rafraîchit et délasse. L'astre du jour est d'une ponctualité d'horloge; il se lève le matin, salue la nature avec une gerbe de feux écarlates. La lune, au contraire, manque de stabilité et d'assurance; elle est enjouée, cachottière. Tantôt elle apparaît à l'occident, montrant seulement son museau pour épier le monde qui l'attend, tantôt elle émerge à l'Orient et se hisse, ronde, belle, éclatante de blancheur, dans le ciel.
Mais cette différence de caractère qui oppose les deux astres n'explique pas encore assez la discorde qui règne entre eux. La cause de leur inimitié remonte bien loin dans la nuit des temps.

Un soir, lasse de son existence folâtre, la lune eut le désir de rencontrer le soleil. Elle s'engagea sur le chemin de ce dernier, gravit une pente difficile, parsemée de cailloux de ronces et d'épines. Après avoir parcouru péniblement une longue distance, elle se trouva brusquement prise de malaise; en l'espace de quelques secondes, sa blancheur pâlit et une grande ombre s'étendit sur la terre. Le soleil, qui voyait la lune s'approcher de lui, souffla alors un vent qui fit désagrégé les cailloux en éclaboussures, dresser les ronces et les épines en dards acérés, hérissant ainsi d'obstacles insurmontables la voie déjà si malaisée que suivait la lune.

En outre, il braqua sur elle ses rayons ardents et, lentement, la lune se consuma.

Elle aurait bientôt été réduite en cendres pour s'éparpiller sur la terre si les hommes, ayant pris conscience du drame qui se jouait, n'avaient de leurs objurgations arrêté le soleil dans son funeste dessein. Ils frappèrent sur des calebasses retournées dans des canaris remplis d'eau, faisant ainsi monter de la terre vers le ciel une rumeur bourdonnante, une désapprobation tumultueuse. En même temps, ils allumèrent du feu devant leurs cases, firent cuire qui du mil, qui du maïs, qui des arachides, et les partagèrent.
aux petits enfants. Ceux-ci, après s'être bien régalés, élevèrent une prière pleine d'innocence qui monta jusque dans les profondeurs des nues. C'est alors seulement que se dénoua l'angoissante tragédie céleste. Pris de commisération, le soleil atténuâ l'ardeur de ses feux et la lune, peu à peu revenue à elle-même, retrouva sa vigueur et rebroussa chemin. Elle reprit sa position et continua silencieusement sa course planétaire pour effectuer sa révolution autour de la terre.

Aujourd'hui encore, il arrive que la belle reine des nuits recommence son aventure pour se retrouver dans une situation tragique en s'engageant dans la voie du soleil. Et comme autrefois, les hommes du Tchad et leurs enfants, pleins d'inquiétude et d'angoisse, recommencent dans la nuit un geste mille fois millénaire pour obtenir la délivrance de la lune, afin d'éloigner de la terre un cataclysme qui serait sans précédent dans l'histoire du monde.
APPENDIX F

Resume of An Experiment in Integrating African Francophone Literature and Culture in A High School French Class

Purpose. The purpose of this experiment was: (1) to ascertain to what extent could francophone African literature and culture be successfully integrated in a regular high school French class, and (2) to see what effect would the utilization of these materials have in stimulating greater interest in the study of the French language among high school students. Ancillary to the main purpose was the hope that from an exposure to African life and culture via examples of literary and folk expression, the students would begin to develop a more positive attitude toward Africa and African peoples and cultures.

The High School. The experiment was conducted at the Samuel Howard Archer High School. This school includes grades eight through twelve. It draws its students from a low socio-economic black community located in northwest Atlanta. Although the student population is 100 percent black, the faculty is composed of both Blacks and Whites. Courses in Spanish and French are offered from grade eight through grade twelve. It is estimated that approximately seventy percent of the total
enrollment completes at least two years of a foreign language. Each year an increasing percentage completes four years of a foreign language.

The Participating Class. Twenty-two students enrolled in intermediate French participated in the experiment. There were six boys and sixteen girls. Their aptitudes, interest, and ultimately their achievement in the target language ranged from high to low. Though several students were above average in their aural-oral manipulation of French, they felt more comfortable reading and writing it. Since the experimental class in African literature and culture was conducted in French, a few class periods were needed to get the students to feel at ease and to participate freely.

The Classroom Teacher. The teacher of the class has from an average to good audiolingual command of French. She holds a master's degree in French and has done additional study in France. She is an experienced teacher having taught for almost twenty years. She is an active member of the local and state foreign language association and of AATF.

Teaching Materials and Equipment. Each foreign language class at Archer High School was housed in an electronic classroom. The teacher and students have ready access to a wide variety of teaching machines including a filmstrip and slide projector, a tape recorder, record player, movie projector, a console
and fully equipped listening stations. For its textbook, the class used *Parler et Lire* by Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

**Organization and Duration.** This experiment lasted ten weeks (from mid October to mid December). Originally it was to have lasted six weeks, but it was extended an additional month at the request of the classroom teacher.

Besides the classroom teacher, there was a resource teacher who taught the Afro-French literary and folk selections used in class. The two worked as a team, with the regular classroom teacher doing the fundamental skills four days each week and the resource teacher doing the enrichment activities once each week. The two planned each enrichment period together so that all class activities treating Afro-French literature and culture would correspond with and re-inforce the particular grammatical, syntactical and/or phonological features that the students had studied that week. Pattern drills embracing African culture but designed to give practice in the manipulation of a certain feature of French grammar were recorded and these were left with the regular classroom teacher for follow-up practice. Cooperative planning was a simple matter, since the resource teacher had been supplied with a copy of the textbook, teacher's manual, and French curriculum guide. Filmstrips and slides depicting African life and culture were also utilized.
Evaluation. Perhaps the best evaluation of a classroom experiment is that that is given by the student participants. Below are given some of the comments made by the students about the experiment. Some of the students did not write an evaluative statement. Inasmuch as this was to be done voluntarily, no effort was made to get them to write one. The statements that follow are representative of the comments made by the students about the class. Students were not required to sign their names to their statements.

Student I

I think the African literature which was used to supplement our daily lessons has been of great value to my study of French, not because of what it was but more because the way it was taught. It is always interesting to learn about other people.

Student II

I learned something new about Africa and her culture that has been touched by French culture. I enjoyed the story "La Legende Baoulé". It gave me an idea about what the Africans themselves think about some of their conditions and customs. This course has helped me to get excited about seeing Africa myself.

Student III

Having Africa related to French was a new experience for
me because in my other French classes we worked mostly with grammar.

Student IV

Yes, I think that the African poems and stories were very exciting and would like to read more. They give us an opportunity to learn about a different way of thinking, with different methods and customs.

Student V

I think the extra material on Africa was great. It broke the monotony of the regular routine. It was education.

Student VI

The poems and stories that we studied about Africa helped us to understand French better. They also helped me to increase my vocabulary. Since these poems and stories were dealing with Africa, they helped us to learn and understand some of Africa's culture.

Despite the favorable comments about the experiment expressed by the students, the writer, who was also the resource teacher and who taught the students African literature and culture in French, feels that the experiment was not as successful linguistically as it could have been had the student been exposed to a more uniform system of audio-lingual instruction prior to the introduction of Afro-French literature
and culture. During the early phases of the experiment, the students were ill at ease in the class because it was conducted in French. Although many of them understood the meaning of the constructions used by the resource teacher, their responses were slow and clumsy. Consequently, time that should have been used for expanding their knowledge of African life and culture was spent drilling orally constructions that second level French students should have mastered earlier in their study of the language. Their unfamiliarity with certain basic constructions in French could be attributed in part to the failure of the French teachers in the school to follow a uniform approach in the teaching of French. So several periods passed before the students began to feel at ease in the class and to respond in the target language with confidence. It should be recognized and acknowledged also that some of the students' reticence must be attributed to adjusting to a different teacher as well as to different teaching techniques.

Despite the shortcomings of this brief experiment more positive results were realized than negative ones. It demonstrated that high school black students welcome opportunities to learn about their French-speaking African and West Indian counterparts; that the writings of these peoples do stimulate renewed interest in learning French; that learning about Africa via the works of Africans creates a desire on the part of the student to visit Africa. From the point of
view of the teacher, the experiment shows that the ideal situation for integrating Afro-French literature and culture in the French curriculum is where the classroom teacher is capable of doing it himself. Where the classroom teacher is knowledgeable on African culture, a true integration of Afro-French literature and culture can be readily effected. The type of team teaching approach used in this experiment is recommended only where the classroom teacher's knowledge of African culture is limited or non-existent.
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