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Revolt in Le passe simple by Driss Chraïbi and Voyage au bout de la nuit by Louis-Ferdinand Celine

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REVOLT IN LE PASSÉ SIMPLE BY DRISS CHRAÏBI AND VOYAGE
AU BOUT DE LA NUIT BY LOUIS-FERDINAND CÉLINE

by

Joshua M. Blaylock

B.A. University of Montana, United States, 2002

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

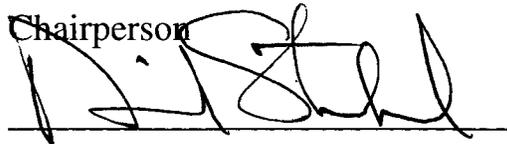
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May 2005

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Revolt in Le passé simple by Driss Chraïbi and Voyage au bout de la nuit by Louis-Ferdinand Céline

Chairperson: Michel Valentin



This professional paper effectuates a comparative analysis of Le passé simple by Driss Chraïbi and Voyage au bout de la nuit by Louis-Ferdinand Céline. The two novels are central to the development of literature and a new stream of consciousness in the 20th Century. In comparing the two texts, this essay has demonstrated that Bardamu, the protagonist of Voyage au bout de la nuit, is a character of abject revolt while Driss Ferdi, the protagonist of Le passé simple, is a character who revolts in the face of abjection and oppression. In a discussion of the two texts, this essay has compared the catalyst of the revolt for the two characters. For Bardamu, his experiences during World War One caused his revolt while Driss revolts against his father, who is cruel and manipulative.

In approaching the two texts, Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection has been another focal point of this essay. In using her ideas concerning abjection in literature, this essay has shown that the key difference between Bardamu and Driss lies at the level of style within the two novels. Bardamu rarely expresses his revulsion with the world externally, his long diatribes are internal. The real revolt lies at the stylistic level of the novel, which uses colloquial speech and slang. In opposition to this, Driss revolts outwardly against the constituted authority, which his father embodies. Driss uses blasphemous language to hit reader and force him to question himself in relation to the text. Thus, although the two texts share remarkable similarities, one can see that they differ at the level of style and the protagonists revolt in different ways.

In the beginning of the 20th Century, French literature changed. The horrible butchery of the 1st and 2nd World Wars as well as scientific breakthroughs like relativity and psychoanalysis forced many authors to question the traditional forms of literary expression. Movements like Surrealism, Theater of the Absurd, Existentialism and the New Novel arose out of the ashes of the realist novel. Voyage au bout de la nuit, which Louis-Ferdinand Céline published in 1932 and Le passé simple, which Driss Chraïbi published in 1954 are both seminal works in the history of 20th Century literature because they exploded like bombs on their respective literary periods and inspired other writers of their generation. For example, one can see parallels between Voyage au bout de la nuit and La nausée by Sartre and L'étranger by Albert Camus. Chraïbi, in going against the predominant literary trend of North Africa, which tried to paint the traditional culture of the region in an almost utopist fashion, changed the way in which North African literature was written after him.

In analyzing these two texts and the common elements they share, this essay will demonstrate that revolt, of which marginalization and abjection are elements, is the central theme of the two texts. Bardamu, the protagonist of Voyage au bout de la nuit, is a character of abject revolt, while Driss Ferdi, the protagonist of Le passé simple, is a character who revolts in the face of abjection. First, this essay will explore the notion of revolt as it relates to the two texts. In Voyage au bout de la nuit, the essay will focus specifically on the War, which is the catalyst for Bardamu's revolt and Rancy, which is a suburb of Paris and where Bardamu witnesses some of the most abject scenes of the novel. In Le passé simple, the essay will focus on the death of Hamid, whom Driss' father murders, which provokes his open revolt and Fès, which is the spiritual center of

Morocco and where Driss experiences his liberation. Additionally, this essay will examine the two texts in relation to Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection to understand the difference between the two protagonists of the novel. Finally, the essay will examine the texts from a stylistic point of view to throw this distinction into further relief.

Turning to the texts, one can begin by discussing the effect the two novels had on their readership. Céline's text exploded the narrative style of the French novel in using slang and exclamatory language. Upon its publication, the book was nominated for the prestigious *prix* Goncourt, yet did not win. This provoked a tremendous scandal. Henri Godard writes, "Dans les jours qui suivirent l'éditeur fit paraître dans la presse des placards publicitaires avec la formule : 'Les Goncourt ont voté. Mais le public a choisi !'" (176) The reception of the novel by the critics was not shared by his fellow writers. Some reacted against the novel. For example, Jean Giono wrote, "Très intéressant, mais de parti pris. Et artificiel. Si Céline avait pensée vraiment ce qu'il a écrit, il se serait suicidé." (Godard 179) In another negative reaction, Bernanos wrote in Le Figaro :

Pour nous la question n'est pas de savoir si la peinture de M. Céline est atroce, nous demandons si elle est vrai. Elle l'est. Et plus vrai encore que la peinture, ce langage inouï, comble du naturel et de l'artifice, inventé, créé de toutes pièces à l'exemple de la tragédie, aussi loin que possible d'une reproduction servile du langage des misérables. (Godard 178)

Thus, this novel had a tremendous effect on its readership from its beginning. By examining the commentary of later writers, like Nathalie Sarraute, one can see the lasting effect this book had on later generations of writers. Sarraute, in a 1989 interview, said,

“Quand on a lu pour la première fois *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, c’était comme une délivrance : tout à coup, la langue parlée faisait irruption dans la littérature. Pour quelques-uns d’entre nous, Céline était un sauveur.” (Godard 185-6) These reactions and observations of the book demonstrate its centrality in 20th Century French literature. In writing about the filth and disgust of the human experience in a style that blew apart the narrative code which had developed throughout the 19th Century, Céline changed the way in which literature could be written.

Le passé simple had an equally strong effect on its readership. Breaking away from the traditional maghrebian novel, which Driss Ferdi describes in the novel stating, “Un bon roman genre vieille école : le Maroc, pays d’avenir, le soleil, le couscous, les métèques, le Bicot sur le bourricot et la Bicote derrière, la danse du ventre, les souks, des Buicks, [...],” (Le passé simple 206) Chraïbi wrote an autobiographical narrative of a young man who revolts against extreme oppression. Chraïbi published his novel in 1954, in the middle of Morocco’s struggle for independence. In an article concerning the problems of representativity, Nicolas Harrison writes, “Partly because of this highly politicized and oppositional context, Chraïbi’s novel attracted a certain amount of attention in France.” (31) Throughout his article, Harrison demonstrates how the competing political forces in France, the left as well as the right and the Moroccan movements, seized upon the book as “representative” of a Moroccan minority with some even going so far as to claim that his novel represented the population of the Arab world itself. For Harrison, this idea of representativity is deeply flawed because it conflates the political and the literary. Chraïbi himself wrote, “I speak in my own name, not in the name of my brothers.” (Harrison 40)

Harrison closes his article by demonstrating that “the vexedness of its reception could be seen to vindicate Chraïbi’s choices. To accept this, however, is to accept that while it may, then, be tempting to see the novel as subversive, as progressive in terms of ‘literary politics’, this subversiveness-of a type specific to and constitutive of that a-responsible space of representation described by Derrida-is fundamentally politically indeterminate.” (41) In following Harrison’s argument, one can see that the surrounding discussion of Chraïbi’s text obfuscates its essential literariness and complexity. Thus, in order to approach this text, this essay will focus on the text itself rather than the surrounding political debate concerning the representativity of the novel. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate that the force and power behind both novels lies at the textual and thematic level.

The American College Encyclopedic Dictionary defines revolt as follows: “1. to break away from or rise against constituted authority, as by open rebellion; cast off allegiance or subjection to those in authority; rebel; mutiny. 2. to turn away in mental rebellion, utter disgust, or abhorrence (fol. by *from*) ; rebel in feeling (fol. by *against*) ; feel disgust or horror (fol. by *at*).”(1039). One can see that revolt contains two elements. First, revolt is against an object, which is an oppressive authority. Second, revolt occurs at an internal level and the choice of preposition which follows this determines which type of revolt. The major difference between Bardamu and Driss occurs at the level of their revolt.

In order to understand this idea of revolt, one must examine the development of these two characters throughout the respective novels. Bardamu begins his journey to the end of night in World War One. After having seen the horrors of the War and the

incomprehensibility of a humanity which allows wholesale slaughter, Bardamu leaves France and travels to Africa where he sees the effects of colonialism at its worst. Next, Bardamu goes to the United States and works in a Ford factory. Upon his return to France, Bardamu becomes a doctor and moves to Rancy on the outskirts of Paris. He leaves Rancy and finally ends up working in an insane asylum at Vigny-sur-Seine. The climax of the novel occurs when Robinson, Bardamu's alter-ego throughout the novel, provokes Madelon, who had been Robinson's accomplice in a murder and who had continued to stalk him through the novel, and she kills him. Throughout the novel, Bardamu is a character of abject revolt because his revolt is passive. The long passages of his revulsion and rejection of authority and society occur internally because he rarely voices his internal revolt. When he does, he is forced to leave and continue his journey.

In contrast, Driss Ferdi, who is the narrator of Le passé simple becomes more and more vocal in his revolt against the authority embodied by his father. The action of the novel takes place during the last several days of Ramadan, one of the holiest periods in the Muslim faith and one of its five pillars. At the beginning of the novel, the reader learns that Driss' father had sent him to school in order to empower him to fight against the colonial power of France. However, his education permits Driss to turn a critical eye upon his society and its shortcomings as well as upon his father. Driss is already in a state of internal revolt at the beginning of the novel but it is the death of Hamid, his brother, at the hands of his father that provokes his rebellion and subsequent banishment from his father's home. His mother, who is horribly abject in the novel because the father, Haj Fatmi Ferdi, treats her as nothing more than a reproductive machine, commits suicide, which causes Driss to leave for France. At several moments in the text, Driss

directly invokes revolt. At one moment he is walking around Fès during the Night of Power during Ramadan and he writes, “Ma religion était la révolte.” (Le passé simple 78) In another instance, Driss is speaking with his friend Roche about his novel and he states, “*Un roman*. Un roman, entends-tu? Dont les éléments seraient : Une histoire de thé, un bref séjour à Fès, la mort d’Hamid, ma révolte.” (198) Thus, one can see how Driss views himself as a rebel.

In her article L’idiolecte de la révolte, Danielle Marx-Scouras describes the language of revolt in Le passé simple and Les boucs, another novel by Chraïbi:

Au moment où les deux narrateurs ne rechercheront plus la ‘fortification et l’indentification du Moi’ dans les ordres symboliques de l’Occident et de l’Islam, jaillera l’idiolecte de la révolte, acte de décolonisation, d’exorcisme, où s’extériorisera le moi refoulé, victime de glottophagie. Idiolecte qui viendra ébranler la commune mesure de l’ordre paternel [...]—langage de normes et dogmes, commandes et interdits—en y introduisant les registres sémantiques du pulsionnel, scatologique, sadique et meurtrier. (31)

Thus, one could say that while both characters revolt, Driss breaks away from a constituted authority, as by open rebellion and casts off allegiance or subjection to those in authority, which the father embodies. On the other hand, Bardamu revolts from, at, and against the human condition. Thus, Bardamu’s revolt is primarily internal while Driss’ revolt is exterior. Additionally, this difference in their revolt expresses itself in the ending of the two texts. Bardamu gives up at the end of his journey and allows death

to overtake him while Driss revolts outwardly against the father and finds liberation in exile.

Although the two characters in the text differ in their revolt, the two texts share striking similarities in the way in which the revolt is represented. Although there are many different aspects of this revolt, this essay will focus on marginalization, and abjection. Bardamu is first marginalized by his reaction to the war. Bardamu's experiences during the war are the catalyst for his revolt. His incomprehension of the capacity of human beings to create such butchery leads to his ultimate refusal of the war which makes him a marginal figure. Bardamu states:

Lui, notre colonel, savait peut-être pourquoi ces deux gens-là tiraient, les Allemands aussi peut-être qu'ils savaient, mais moi, vraiment, je savais pas. Aussi, loin que je cherchais dans ma mémoire, je ne leur avais rien fait aux Allemands. J'avais été bien aimable et bien poli avec eux. Je les connaissais un peu les Allemands, j'avais même été à l'école chez eux, étant petit, aux environs de Hanover. J'avais parlé leur langue. [...] Mais de là à nous tirer maintenant dans le coffret, sans même venir nous parler d'abord et en plein milieu de la route, il y avait de la marge et même un abîme. Trop de différence. (Voyage 11-12)

Thus, one can understand the beginning of his marginalization. Modern warfare is something outside of oneself which is beyond the scope of understanding.

In another passage, which illustrates his incomprehension of the war, Bardamu states:

Oui j'avais cru cela malin, imaginez ! Pour me faire soustraire à la bataille de cette façon, honteux, mais vivant encore, pour revenir en la paix comme on revient, exténué, à la surface de la mer après un long plongeon... J'ai bien failli réussir... Mais la guerre dure décidément trop longtemps... On ne conçoit plus à mesure qu'elle s'allonge d'individus suffisamment dégoûtants pour dégoûter la Patrie... Elle s'est mise à accepter tous les sacrifices, d'où qu'ils viennent, toutes les viandes la Patrie... Elle est devenue infiniment indulgente dans le choix des martyrs la Patrie ! [...] On va faire, dernière nouvelle, un héros avec moi!... Il faut que la folie des massacres soit extraordinairement impérieuse, pour qu'on se mette à pardonner le vol d'une boîte de conserve! (Voyage 67)

This passage unites several of the themes concerning Bardamu's revolt. First, the absurdity of the situation is almost comical. In the middle of the butchery of the war, the commanders find time to punish such a small infraction, that of stealing the preserves, with such a large punishment. That such a small act can take on such a large importance reinforces Bardamu's incomprehension of the absurdity of war. Additionally, one can see the elements of Céline's style in the ellipses and exclamations. Also, one notices the ironic personification of the homeland in describing it as indulgent. Finally, the use of the imagery of a long dive under water reinforces the idea that Bardamu himself feels as if he were drowning in the horror of the war.

This incomprehension in the face of the brutality of warfare is reinforced by the abjection he experiences during the war. In her essay on abjection, Julia Kristeva describes abjection as the signified of modern literature. « [T]hen one understands that

abjection, and even more so abjection of self, is its only signified. Its signifier, then, is none but literature.” (5) Throughout her essay, Kristeva demonstrates the presence of abjection in modern literature and discusses its various qualities. For Kristeva, abjection is a revolt of being which provokes a violent reaction in the subject. “There looms, within abjection,” Kristeva writes, “one of those violent, dark revolts of being directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable.” (1). This revolt causes such a violent reaction and evokes an extreme sense of horror and disgust because, according to Kristeva, one tries to revolt against an object. However, in abjection this object of the revulsion is a non-object and thus lies in the primal and pre-verbal object/subject relationship of the child. Thus, abjection functions at the level of the unconscious. For Kristeva, Céline is the abject author *par excellence*.

Describing his experiences during the war, Bardamu describes two corpses. First, Kristeva identifies the corpse seen without God as the ultimate form of abjection. She writes, “The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection.” (4). In Céline, Bardamu becomes the abject narrator after the horrors he witnesses during the First World War. In one poignant moment, he describes the corpse of a child :

Et j’aperçus-c’était vrai-au fond, le petit cadavre couché sur un matelas, habillé en costume marin ; et le cou et la tête livides autant que la lueur même de la bougie, dépassaient d’un grand col carré bleu. Il était recroquevillé sur lui-même, bras et jambes et dos recourbés l’enfant. Le coup de lance lui avait fait comme un axe pour la mort par le milieu du ventre. Sa mère, elle pleurait fort, à coté, à genoux, le père aussi. Et puis,

ils se mirent à gémir encore tous ensemble. Mais, j'avais bien soif.

(Voyage 39).

This powerful image of the child lying in a cellar in a fetal position, wearing a blue sailor suit, with an a hole in the middle of the stomach invokes the utmost of abjection because the child is represented as innocent with his clothing and fetal position. Bardamu portrays the macabre scene in vivid detail in describing the lighting, the boy's wound, and the family's reaction. Yet, the final sentence, "I was quite thirsty," is the most powerful because Bardamu places a distance between himself and the scene before him. His thirst is more important than the scene before him. He has lost something of his humanity and is thus abject to the reader because the reader is disgusted with Bardamu's reaction.

Bardamu has the same type of reaction when a bomb explodes and kills his colonel. He writes :

Autant au colonel, lui, je ne lui voulais pas de mal. Lui pourtant aussi il était mort. Je ne le vis plus, tout d'abord. C'est qu'il avait été déporté sur le talus, allongé sur le flanc par l'explosion et projeté jusque dans les bras du cavalier à pied, le messenger, fini lui aussi. Ils s'embrassaient tous les deux pour le moment et pour toujours. Mais le cavalier n'avait plus sa tête, rien qu'une ouverture au-dessus du cou, avec du sang dedans qui mijotait en glouglous comme de la confiture dans la marmite. Le colonel avait son ventre ouvert, il en faisait une sale grimace. Ça avait dû lui faire du mal ce coup-là au moment où c'était arrivé. Tant

pis pour lui ! S'il était parti dès les premières balles, ça ne lui serait pas arrive. Toutes ces viandes saignaient énormément ensemble. (Voyage 17)

First, Bardamu begins by saying that he had not wished the colonel any harm. The scene is almost rendered comical by the image of the two victims kissing in death. Yet, the next image is horribly abject in that the reader has a shocking image of the beheaded messenger. The onomatopoeic description using the word “glouglou” reinforces this strong imagery. The description of the colonel's death using words like “mijotait,” “confiture,” and “marmite” evoke food and drink, which are associated with life. Yet, the description is rendered more disgusting because of the juxtaposition of these terms of eating and drinking, and in turn life, within a description of death. Additionally, the colonel's death is robbed of any signification or meaning by the next few lines which portray it as a mistake on his part in not trying to save his own skin when the bombs and shells started exploding around him. In this scene, the heroic, ennobling death of the warrior is robbed of its meaning particularly with the last line, which places the dead bodies on the side of the animal in using the word “viandes”. Bardamu can see no transcendent quality in the death around him.

In Chraïbi, two corpses are abject. First, his brother Hamid dies at the hands of his father and then the mother dies by committing suicide. In both instances, the narrator finds himself looking at the abject corpse. Although one may argue that since the society of Chraïbi is Islamic, the corpse is indeed seen with God, I would argue that God is not present at all in the text and that these corpses are abject. For example, in the scene in which Driss discovers his mother committed suicide, Driss is called back to his home by his father. While speaking with his father, he notices:

un objet emballé dans un drap. Enveloppement hâtif, deux noeuds croisés, voilà tout. Quelque chose qui a saigné, beaucoup saigné, saigné il y a dix ou douze heures, les taches sont sèches et les lumières les font ressortir d'un carmine presque intolérable à la vue. Un quartier de viande fort probablement, quelque cuissot-ou encore un chevreuil..." (Le passé simple 226)

At the end of this section, Driss learns that the object is actually his mother. Yet, in describing it initially as resembling some kind of slaughtered animal, one can see a strong link between the corpse seen here and the corpse as it is seen by Bardamu during the war.

One can argue that the revolt of Bardamu as well as Driss is essentially a revolt against the position of the Father. In Céline's text, Bardamu's revolt is against France, the fatherland (patrie), which is in the position of the father. While he is on the boat traveling to Africa, his fellow shipmates threaten him and he decides the only way to save himself is to say, "Vive la France alors, nom de Dieu! Vive la France!" C'était le truc du sergent Branledore. Il réussit encore dans ce cas-là. Ce fut le seul cas où la France me sauva la vie, jusque-là c'était plutôt la contraire." (Voyage 123) The fatherland had tried to kill him during the war and for once Bardamu is able to subvert the discourse of dying for one's homeland. He does not believe what he is saying but it saves his life nevertheless.

In Chraïbi, the revolt against the name-of-the-Father is literal. The narrator in the text revolts against the strong patriarch of the family. When Hamid dies, Driss revolts against his father. In one scene, the father requires all the family members to spit on him

after the interment of Hamid. His father decides to symbolically purify himself through self abasement, Driss sees through this and says:

Vous avez calculé: l'acte le plus spectaculaire serait l'auto avilissement. Et vous vous êtes assis. De nous, habitués à la servilité, à vous le tout-puissant sur nos corps et nos âmes, un crachat ne peut être qu'une glorification. Et demain votre joug serait plus lourd et plus sûr. [...] Celui que vous avez instruit, à qui vous réservez la jouissance d'un autre monde – et votre sceptre et votre couronne. Nous deviendrons en toi une explosion prochaine, disiez-vous l'autre soir. Et vous souhaitez que cette explosion ne fût pour moi qu'une cause de transformation susceptible de faire de moi un homme moderne et surtout heureux. [...] Et parce que je ne suis pas méchant, je vise les yeux. (Le passé simple 171-2)

In this scene, one notices that Driss turns the father's plan against him. Spitting in his father's face after explaining his reasoning is the ultimate form of rebellion for Driss because his father understands that Driss is indeed spitting on his father, not out of a desire to forgive him or because his father had ordered him to do this, but because he actually despises the father and sees him as a contemptible figure. Up to this point in the novel, Driss has been in state of revolt but the death pushes him over the edge and causes the reaction which leads to his banishment from the household. After this outburst, Fatmi, his father banishes him from the household saying, "Tu étais un être béni, tu avais tout à attendre de l'avenir. Tu n'es plus notre fils et nous ne sommes plus ton père. Ne pense jamais à nous ni à tes frères. Tu es notre honte à tous. Ne murmure jamais en toi-même le nom de ta mère qui t'aime dévotement." (Le passé simple 173)

In opposition to this type of revolt which is direct and forceful, Bardamu almost never voices his disgust and revulsion about the world. In one famous scene, which is a rare example of Bardamu expressing his revulsion outwardly, Lola and Bardamu are discussing the war and Lola calls Bardamu a coward for refusing the war. Bardamu responds:

Oui, tout à fait lâche, Lola, je refuse la guerre et tout ce qu'il y a dedans... Je ne la déplore pas moi... Je ne me résigne pas moi... Je ne pleurniche pas dessus moi... Je la refuse tout net, avec tous les hommes qu'elle contient, je ne veux rien avoir à faire avec eux, avec elle. Seraient-ils neuf cent quatre-vingt-quinze millions et moi tout seul, c'est eux qui ont tort, Lola, et c'est moi qui ai raison, parce que je suis le seul à savoir ce que je veux : je ne veux plus mourir. (Voyage 65)

Bardamu agrees that he is a coward but he is only a coward because he has understood that he does not want to die. For him, death has no meaning and no transcendence. This understanding of his inner being separates him from the rest of humanity. Yet as a result of his outward expression, Lola leaves him because she cannot understand him. Thus, this is the first time he is marginalized by his revolt in the face of the war. His incomprehension of the horror of the war causes the revolt, which will haunt him through the rest of the novel.

In the case of Driss Ferdi, this marginalization occurs at the level of his family and society. The marginalization for Driss is a result of his education. His family originally sent him to enable him to combat the French domination, yet he becomes marginalized because he can no longer accept the hypocrisy within his own society. For

Bardamu, pride is a result of education. “Les études ça vous change, ça fait l’orgueil d’un homme. Il faut bien passer par là pour entrer dans le fond de la vie. Avant, on tourne autour seulement.” (Voyage 240). Here, one can see a strong link between the idea of pride and education in relation to Le passé simple because it is through his education that he has learned to criticize his father and the social system which supports him.

Bardamu’s experiences during the war cause him to fall into a state of abjection. Yet during the war, Bardamu meets the character who is his alter-ego throughout the story. Robinson is an extremely important character in the novel because he represents the action that Bardamu himself cannot take. In his article, Dominique Rabaté argues that the real underlying success of the novel lies in the tension between the biographic and autobiographic models of literature which he sees as poles. He states, “On y sent, pourtant, déjà l’indice d’une autre structuration avec le retour significatif de Robinson, à chaque étape du parcours de Bardamu. [...] Le moteur dramatique vient de Robinson.” (Rabaté 184) It is in meeting Robinson during the war that Bardamu can finally reject the war, an act which separates him from Lola.

In Voyage, the ambiguity, which is a result of Bardamu's abjection, occurs at the interplay between two voices. One sees the external voice of Bardamu and his relation with the outside world. “J’étais trop complaisant avec tout le monde, et je le savais bien. Personne ne me payait. J’ai consulté à l’œil, surtout par curiosité. C’est un tort. Les gens se vengent des services qu’on leur rend.” (Voyage 244) For Bardamu, the exclamatory language of his revolt is internal while he never really expresses this revolt outwardly. Also, Robinson functions on this level as well because when Robinson appears in the

text, Bardamu has a difficult time in controlling his outward exclamations. While examining a baby in Nancy, Bardamu writes, “Depuis le retour de Robinson, je me trouvais devenu bien étrange dans ma tête et mon corps et les cris de ce petit innocent me firent une impression abominable.” (Voyage 273) In each instance that the internal becomes the external, Bardamu is forced to face a reaction on the part of the others or he is forced to physically leave his surroundings. The major difference between Bardamu and Driss lies in the fact that Bardamu rarely outwardly expresses his revulsion in the face of abjection while Driss does.

For Kristeva, abjection in the modern text has replaced the traditional monotheistic view of abjection in which the sublime is necessary to cleanse the abject. In Chraïbi, this relationship is more problematic. First, the actual chronology of the text takes place during the last days of Ramadan. Thus, the traditional form of purification, which he subverts when he hears the news of his brother’s death, is intertwined with the difficulty of Chraïbi to overcome the abjection. After the confrontation with the fqih, Driss leaves the house and goes out into Fès, which is a great religious center with one of the largest mosques in North Africa. When he arrives at the mosque, Si Kettani is giving a discourse and he begins asking question. In the middle of this passage, Driss receives the telegram that his brother Hamid has died. “J’ouvris le télégramme,” he states, “Le lus. Le relus. Chose étrange, ce n’était ni la stupeur ni la douleur qui me vrillait, mais la joie. [...] L’action était née.” (Le passé simple 108-9) His reaction in the face of this is a liberation from the oppressive chains of his father. He then addresses the crowd saying, “Vous dites? ... Messieurs, non. Je ne suis pas un sacrilège... Un communiste? Non plus. Je m’appelle Driss, fils de Haj Fatmi Ferdi et petits-fils d’Omar Zwitten. [...]

puisque c'est la Nuit du Pouvoir, vous venez de me donner le Pouvoir, mon Dieu ; de cela je vous remercie, mais je ne sais jusqu'où me mènera ce pouvoir..." (Le passé simple 109) This is the turning point for Driss. He now has the ability to confront his father and thus he finds one possibility for his liberation.

Although Driss has found the power to revolt, he returns to ask Si Kettani for aid and the fqih once again makes sexual advances and threatens to drop Driss into a pit where he will be raped by chimpanzees. Upon leaving the Si Kettani's home, Driss is walking along the street and sees a scene of abjection:

Tourné vers une borne et la main sur l'estomac, un vieillard vomissait quelque chose de rouge-du sang plutôt que du vin, il avait la toux ronflante du catarrhe-, pudique, très maigre. Plus loin, sur un monceau de déchets de pastèques, un enfant à demi nu, les dents blanches et les yeux blancs, mort. Et des pigeons qui roucoulaient, des fours publics qui rougeoyaient, des fenêtres à rais luminescents et, là-bas, l'horizon où l'on devinait déjà le brasillage de l'aurore. Afin que nul ne puisse dire qu'il n'y a plus de vie. La vie est là, sourdissante à chaque pas, à chaque ordure que mes semelles traînent. (Le passé simple 112)

In this description, one sees the paradox for Driss. With each revolt and each step toward his ultimate liberation from his father and although he had a cathartic, cleansing experience in the mosque, he is reminded in seeing this abjection before him that the filth and disgusting life is always present.

Although both narrators revolt against the position of the father, one can again use Kristeva to deepen the understanding of this revolt. For Kristeva, the victims of the

abject are often its fascinated victims. She writes, “[S]o many victims for the abject are its fascinated victims-if not its submissive and willing ones.” (9) This idea of fascination expresses itself in both texts. In being fascinated by their abjection, the abject narrator reinforces his abjection. Although he is in a state of revolt, he can never totally extricate himself from the state of abjection itself. For Bardamu, he is caught in his voyage which he can never separate himself from. The object(s) of his revulsion always seem to be an outside of him whether it be poverty, the situation of the colonized, the plight of the mentally ill or the war while in the case of Chraïbi it is much more powerful. Driss Ferdi has a defined object of his revolt, his father.

Kristeva’s idea of fascination and abjection ties into another quality she describes for abjection. For Kristeva, abjection is linked very closely to voyeurism and fetishism:

Voyeurism is a structural necessity in the constitution of the object relation, showing up every time the object shifts towards the abject; it becomes true perversion only if there is a failure to symbolize the subject/object instability. Voyeurism accompanies the writing of abjection. When that writing stops, voyeurism becomes a perversion.

(Kristeva 46)

In examining the voyeurism of the abject, I will discuss two poignant scenes in the two novels. In the latter part of Voyage, Bardamu moves to Rancy and becomes a doctor for the poor who live there. In one particularly disturbing scene, Bardamu hears two parents torturing their daughter. “J’écoutais jusqu’au bout pour être certain que je ne me trompais pas, que c’était bien ça qui se passait. Je ne pouvais pas fermer la fenêtre non plus. Je n’étais bon à rien. Je ne pouvais rien faire. Je restais à écouter seulement

comme toujours, partout...” (Voyage 267). This scene is an example of voyeuristic fascination. Again, Bardamu’s inability to shut the window or look away from the scene reflects back upon him. He can not tear himself away from the scene and yet this reinforces his state of abjection. He knows that the young girl is being tortured, yet he does nothing. The scene revolts him, yet his passivity is always present. Not only is he passive in the face of this atrocious violation, he hints that there is a voyeuristic jouissance in the act of listening. Finally, the scene is rendered more abject by the next description in which Bardamu sees the family walking about and they have the appearance of a normal family.

One of the few scenes in which this type of voyeuristic abjection is present in the In Le passé simple occurs in the fourth part of the text. As Ferdi is walking around the town, he hears a child crying inside a shop. Passersby who hear the child crying believe that the man is teaching the boy weights and measures, which is similar to the appearance of the normal family discussed above with Bardamu. Yet, upon peering into the closed shop he sees the man raping a young boy. “Je m’approche de la boutique. Je regarde par une rainure. Il y a un petit enfant par terre. Ses fesses sont nues. Celles de l’homme également. Il n’y a pas de poids. Ni de balance. Ni de martinet. Tout simplement un bol plein d’huile où trempe la main de l’homme. Peut-être de la sorte arrivera-t-il à faire taire l’enfant.” (Le passé simple 220)

This horrible scene is described from a voyeuristic perspective. First, Driss views the scene through a small crack. However, this is where the similarity with the abject voyeurism stops. Driss does not describe his reaction to the scene and it is one of the few in which Driss does not directly confront the situation. He is a passive observer to the

scene and thus the scene is rendered more abject because the reader and the narrator have fused and seem to be watching the scene together. Although this scene occurs in the text and does contain this voyeuristic fascination of which Kristeva speaks, the scene serves to reinforce the difference between Bardamu and Driss in their revolt. Bardamu is almost always passive and abject and there is almost a jouissance in his abjection. The reader has no indication of Driss' reaction, but the reader does not have the same experience in reading this passage. With Bardamu, his voyeuristic fascination reinforces, for the reader, his abjection while Driss revolts against these same abject situations.

In both texts this revolt is illustrated by the style of the writing. However, a key difference exists at the level of style which highlights the key difference between Bardamu and Driss. While Bardamu does not outwardly revolt, Céline's novel is a revolt at the level of style. In Voyage, Céline uses an elliptical, exclamatory style which goes against a classical narrative style. Additionally, Céline's use of slang underlines this revolt. In Le passé simple, Chraïbi, while not using the same type of elliptical, exclamatory style, does use blasphemy to mark his text. These similarities at the level of style hit the reader and force him to question his own position.

Although these two texts share remarkable similarities concerning abjection, they differ on one major point that I must address in this paper that of the destruction at the level of style. Le passé simple is a narrative in the sense that it follows a linear progression. For Kristeva, the abjection finds its way into the text and thus perverts the style of the text itself.

[E]motion, in order to make itself heard, adopts colloquial speech, or, when it acknowledges its hatred straightforwardly, slang... The

vocabulary of slang, because of its strangeness, its very violence, and especially because the reader does not always understand it, is of course a radical instrument of separation, of rejection, and, at the limit, of hatred. Slang produces a semantic fuzziness, if not interruption, within the utterances that it punctuates and rhythmicizes, but above all it draws near to that emptiness of meaning. (191)

For Kristeva, Céline is the abject author *par excellence* because he perverts the style in several ways. First, the usage of slang is a form of abjection in the text. Slang hits the reader with a sledgehammer. As Céline himself said, “Slang is the language of hatred that knocks the reader out very nicely...annihilates him!... Completely in your power!... he just lies there like an eight ball” (Kristeva, 191). Second, Kristeva sees in Céline’s elliptical style a concrete example of the writer vomiting himself onto the page. One can also see the popular style in his writing in not using “ne...pas” construction in the correct grammatical sense. In taking out the “ne” as is common in colloquial French he allows the spoken to enter the text. A third characteristic is the method of displacing the subject/object of the sentence to create an ambiguity at the level of syntax. The scene in which Madelon kills Robinson demonstrates this distance in the face of abjection.

Bardamu is sitting next to Robinson when Madelon kills him:

Elle a dû se reculer un peu sur la banquette, tout au fond. Elle devait tenir le revolver à deux mains parce que quand le feu lui est parti c’était comme tout droit de son ventre et puis presque ensemble encore deux coups deux fois à la suite... De la fumée poivrée alors qu’on a eue plein le taxi...

Madelon l'a repoussé violemment, elle s'est jetée en dehors...J'avais beau la rappeler. (Voyage 494-5)

This description of murder has a distancing effect. In the construction of the first two sentences, Bardamu uses the verb "devoir" conjugated in the pluperfect and the imperfect. Thus, one has the impression of seeing the scene from a distance. Thus, his description of this abject scene is subjective and non-subjective at the same time because it is described from the third person and the verb tenses support this distance, yet, it is subjective because Bardamu is in the carriage when the incident occurs.

In contrast to this, Chraïbi's text is not perverted or changed in the same manner as in Céline. First, one can examine the voyage to Fès and the religious experience during the night of power, which is the moment he acquires the capacity to revolt against his father. After Fatmi realizes that Driss had thought about killing him, he sends his son to Fès. Upon arriving in Fès, he meets the fqih, who is a minor religious figure who has learned the Koran by heart, with whom he has a long discussion. During this discussion the internal dialogue of Driss becomes external. In his conversation with the Si Kettani, Driss speaks his mind and tells the fqih, "Deuxièmement. Vous êtes haj. Comme le Seigneur. Riche. Comme le Seigneur. Et puissant, sûr de vous, honorable. Comme lui. Je vous hais." (Le passé simple 84) In this scene, Driss demonstrates his disgust at a man who is supposed to uphold the Koranic teachings and yet disobeys them openly by making sexual advances toward a young man. Additionally, one sees a literary device which repeats itself throughout the text. In the text, Driss' internal dialogue is then repeated verbatim externally with only a slight change in voice. For example, during the same conversation with the fqih, Driss states, "Je connaissais le jeu. L'on dispose des

figues sèches.” (Le passé simple 92) In the next paragraph, the same text is kept, yet it begins, “Alors, dis-je, je connais le jeu. L’on dispose de figues sèches.” (Le passé simple 92) This change from internal to external is one of the characteristics of the language of Driss’ revolt. Thus, this section of the book is important because it is in Fès that Driss begins to revolt openly against the religious authority, within which he sees his father.

The one area which the two texts find common ground is at the level of slang. Although one can find numerous examples of slang in the text, this sledgehammer effect is created primarily by the blasphemous language and subject material. Three specific examples of this blasphemous subversion can help to understand how Chraïbi interjects this language. In one instance, Driss describes his mother as “Une parmi les créatures de Dieu que le Coran a parquées: ‘Baisez-les et les rebaisez; par le vagin, c’est plus utile; ensuite, ignorez-les jusqu’à la jouissance prochaine.’ ” (Le passé simple 44) Of course, this kind of language is provocative as it attacks the sacred nature of the Koran itself. In using the blasphemous language, Chraïbi hits the reader with that célinien sledgehammer. This also exposes the hypocrisy of his father, a venerated Haj. Although he is well respected in the society for his money as well as stature, his treatment of his wife actually goes against the real teaching of the Koran. Another example of this blasphemous language occurs in the section in which Driss writes his exam for the French educators. In describing the fasting of Ramadan, he writes :

Le jeûne est généralement admis dans les croyances et partout suivi comme un rite millénaire. C’est-à-dire qu’en dehors de ceux qui sont obligés de travailler tous les jours pour subvenir à leurs besoins, les gens paressent dans leurs lits jusqu’à midi et font ensuite des parties

interminables de poker ou de loto, pour tromper la faim. Les jeux de hasard sont interdits par la loi et le Ramadan est un mois de recueillement et de prières. (Le passé simple 209)

Thus, we can see that this kind of language is blasphemous, he is describing Ramadan and points out that the purpose of Ramadan is lost in his experience because those who practice it do so only out of habit and thus the ritual is empty. His description exposes the hypocrisy of his experience. This passage also demonstrates the difference between Bardamu and Driss. Bardamu never expresses any kind of revolt, the revolt comes from Céline and his style. In opposition to this, Driss Ferdi voices this blasphemous language in the story itself. Thus, the author and the character are inextricably bound.

To conclude, Le passé simple by Driss Chraïbi and Voyage au bout de la nuit by Louis-Ferdinand Céline are seminal works in the history of French and Francophone literature because both works changed the narrative style in their respective periods. Both novels are novels of revolt. In a sense, the two novels expose the paradox of modern literature. Most of the literary movements in 20th Century French and Francophone literature revolt against their literary predecessors. Yet, their success in this revolt established a tradition. This cycle of revolt, establishing a tradition, then another movement challenging that tradition embodies the development of 20th Century literature. Thus, in order to push this study further, one could compare these two authors with others in the 20th Century thus deepening the understanding of revolt as it relates to the 20th Century Novel and, moreover, how the various generations of authors in the 20th Century revolt and push literature into new narrative realms.

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