

***Métissage* and Crossing Boundaries in the Seventeenth-Century Travel Narrative to the Indian Ocean Basin**

by
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Seventeenth-century France saw the production of a considerable number of travel narratives, which reflected the increasing level of European presence and interest in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. These popular texts testify to levels of crossover between personal experience and intertextual tradition. They emphasize the dramatic nature of travellers' adventures, while also representing—or offering explanations for—the cultural and physical particularities of human populations.

The settlements around the Indian Ocean Basin received diverse levels of attention by travellers, some of whose journals and travel narratives have only recently been (re)published. The Indo-Portuguese city of Goa inspired the greatest quantity of testimony. Despite the restrictions of a competitive colonial context, French visitors throughout the seventeenth century left accounts of the diverse population of this settlement. These include the popular early-century accounts of the apothecary Jean Mocquet and of François Pyrard, the latter of whom spent a decade in the *Indes*.¹ Lesser-studied mid-century visitors to Goa include François La Boullaye Le Gouz or the Discalced Carmelite Philippe de la Très-Sainte Trinité.² As the seventeenth century advanced, the increasing Dutch presence in the *Indes* is reflected in accounts of Batavia by two Protestants, the mercenary Jean Guidon de Chambelle and the better-known jeweller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier.³ Peripheral figures, such as the corsair François

¹ Jean Mocquet [1575–1616?], *Voyages en Afrique, Asie, Indes orientales et occidentales* (Paris: Chez Jean de Heuqueville, 1617), repr. (Rouen: Jacques Cailloué, 1645); Fourth part reprinted as *Voyage à Mozambique & Goa*, ed. by Xavier de Castro & Dejanirah Couto (Paris: Éditions Chandeigne, 1996); François Pyrard de Laval [1570–1621], *Voyage de François Pyrard de Laval...*, 2 vols (Paris: Chez Samuel Thiboust, 1619); repr. as *Voyage de Pyrard de Laval aux Indes orientales (1601–1611)*, ed. by Xavier de Castro, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions Chandeigne, 1998).

² François La Boullaye Le Gouz [1623–1668], *Les Voyages et Observations du Sieur de La Boullaye Le Gouz* (Paris: Gervais Clousier, 1653); Philippe de la Très-Sainte Trinité [1603–1674], *Voyage d'Orient...* (Lyon: Antoine Jullieron, 1652; repr. 1669).

³ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier [1605–1689], *Recueil de plusieurs Relations & Traitez singuliers et curieux de J. B. Tavernier, Escuyer, Baron d'Aubonne, Qui n'ont point esté mis dans ses six premiers Voyages. Divisé en cinq parties...* (Paris: Gervais Clouzier, 1679); the voyage of Jean Guidon de Chambelle has been published by Dirk Van der

Cauche, whose voyage to Madagascar is related in a 1651 account, testify to the trade networks encompassing the Indian Ocean Basin.⁴ There were also French expeditions—and therefore large-scale encounters with indigenous populations—during the seventeenth century; these inspired the *Histoire* left by the governor of the one-time French colony on Madagascar, Etienne de Flacourt, or a *journal de voyage* left by Robert Challe on a French expedition to the *Indes* in 1690-91.⁵ The increasing French interest in advancing France's economic role in the East is reflected in the travels to India of the ill-fated Abbé Barthélemy Carré, recently published by Dirk Van der Cruysse.⁶

To judge from these texts, the French presence in the East gives an impression of fragmentation, and this corpus, taken as a whole, often testifies to fleeting encounters with competitive political and economic systems from which many French witnesses were excluded. This was the case with Mocquet, who found himself living in poverty in Goa at the beginning of the seventeenth century, or his contemporary Pyrard, who arrived in Goa while grievously ill, and was lodged at the Hospital before being imprisoned. Of course, some French testimony, like François Bernier's account of his travels in the Mughal Empire, testifies to a comparatively deep knowledge of Asian societies.⁷ Ecclesiastics who travelled to Asia might do so as part of supra-national (although themselves potentially competitive) networks. However, the political and economic nature of French presence means that within this corpus of texts are hints at the possibility of isolated, often marginal, encounters with societies perceived as dynamic, and undergoing considerable transformations.

Cruysse as *Mercenaires français de la VOC: le récit de Jean Guidon de Chambelle (1644–1651) & autres documents* (Paris: Chandeigne, 2003).

⁴ François Cauche [1615?–?], *Relation de Voyage que François Cauche de Rouen a fait à Madagascar, Isles adjacentes & Coste d'Afrique: Recueilly par le Sieur Morisot* (Paris: Augustin Courbé, 1651).

⁵ Etienne de Flacourt [1607–1660], *Histoire de la Grande Isle Madagascar* (Paris: Alexandre Lesselin, 1658); Robert Challe [1659–1721], *Journal d'un voyage fait aux Indes orientales* (Rouen: Jean-Baptiste Macheuel, 1721), repr. as *Journal d'un voyage fait aux Indes orientales (1690–91)*, ed. by Frédéric Deloffre & Melâhat Menemencioglu (Paris: Mercure de France, 1979).

⁶ Abbé Barthélemy Carré [1636?–1699?], *Le Courrier du Roi en Orient: Relations de deux voyages en Perse et en Inde 1668–1674*, ed. by Dirk Van der Cruysse (Paris: Fayard, 2005).

⁷ François Bernier [1620–1688], *Histoire de la dernière Révolution des États du Grand Mogol; Événements particuliers; Suite des Mémoires* (Paris: Barbin, 1670–1671); repr. in *Un Libertin dans l'Inde Moghole: les Voyages de François Bernier, 1656–1669*, ed. F. Tinguely, A. Paschoud, C. –A Chamay (Paris: Chandeigne, 2008).

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The present study, then, is intended to dwell on those regions of the text that can be considered as *marginal*, and in particular through focus on reflections in this corpus of another potentially marginal group, the *métis*. With the exception of several valuable pages of Sophie Linon-Chipon's *Gallia Orientalis* (2003), the topos of *métissage* in first-hand accounts of settlements in coastal Africa and Asia has traditionally received less attention than in the *Antilles* (or, with Sara E. Melzer's recent *Colonizer or Colonized*, seventeenth-century Brazil and *Nouvelle France*).⁸ Mentions of the *métis* in the Indian Ocean Basin are infrequent and often fleeting, but nonetheless indicate the distinct place of the entity in proto-colonial societies, sometimes in ways which hint at the reflection of problematic hierarchies. In approaching this subject, the present article will attempt to remain alive to the multiple social, religious and textual currents influencing the representation of the *métis*. Beginning with a study of the question of *race* and the classification of populations, it will then explore French representations of unfamiliar socio-economic hierarchies in Asia. This will be followed by analysis of the *métissage* resulting from new European settlements in the Indian Ocean Basin. The dramatic manifestations of this phenomenon—in cautionary anecdotes—will be the object of the last section.

In the early modern period, the increasingly frequent encounter between Europeans and numerous populations both East and West inspired much debate on the nature and extent of the differences between peoples. Giuliano Gliozzi's *Adamo e il nuovo mondo* has demonstrated, for example, how the question of the origins of indigenous Amerindian peoples might reinforce or undermine various colonial pretensions; Gliozzi's account of the diverse fortunes of theories (and theorists) of polygenesis shows the subversive import of interrogations of the biblical narrative of the shared origins of humanity.⁹ While the texts bequeathed by French

⁸ Sophie Linon-Chipon, *Gallia Orientalis: Voyages aux Indes Orientales (1529–1722): Poétique et imaginaire d'un genre littéraire en formation* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003); especially the section « *La rencontre de l'autre et la figure du métis* », 448–453; Chantal Maignan-Claverie, *Le métissage dans la littérature des Antilles françaises: Le complexe d'Ariel* (Paris: Karthala, 2005); Sara E. Melzer, *Colonizer or Colonized: the Hidden Stories of Early Modern French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). Melzer furnishes an interesting study of the apparent promotion of French-Amerindian marriages, 91–121.

⁹ Giuliano Gliozzi, *Adamo e il Nuovo Mondo: la nascita dell'antropologia come ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali, 1500–1700* (Florence:

travellers devoted much attention to what would now be termed “cultural” phenomena such as law, religion, or culinary habits, the physical differences between Europeans and non-Europeans also received considerable attention. Those who had travelled far outside Europe reflect curiosity about the reasons for this visible physical diversity. Descriptions, as well as illustrations, of the differences in physiognomy and colour abound in travel narratives, and authors often resorted to comparisons with known *topoi* to this end. In these texts, reactions could take the form of aesthetic terms of appreciation. These might consist of comment on physical traits considered displeasing, or indeed, as with the traveller and physician François Bernier, of considerable attention to the perceived beauty of the women of the *Indes*.¹⁰

However, observers also formulated these differences of appearance into distinct categories such as *nation*, *peuple*, or indeed, *espèce* or *race*. The use of such terminology demonstrates a shifting, somewhat problematic, signifying potential of language confronted with new forms of difference. The connotations of the term *race* during the seventeenth century are illustrative of this. *Race* might encompass “Lignée, Extraction, Descendance, Famille” as César de Rochefort’s 1685 *Dictionnaire* makes clear.¹¹ Furetière’s *Dictionnaire Universel* (1690) and the later *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* both similarly restrict the use of *race* to terms synonymous with “Lignée, generation continuée de pere en fils,”¹² or “Lignée, lignage, extraction” respectively.¹³ It is Bernier, however, who is

La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1977); trans. by Arlette Estève and Pascal Gabellone as *Adam et le Nouveau Monde: la naissance de l’anthropologie comme idéologie coloniale: des généalogies bibliques aux théories raciales (1500–1700)* (Lecques: Théétète Éditions, 2000). All references are to the French translation. On, for example, Isaac de la Peyrère’s *Prae-Adamitae* (n.p.: n. pub., 1655), see Gliozzi, 440–457.

¹⁰ François Bernier, *Nouvelle Division de la Terre, par les différentes Espèces ou Races d’hommes qui l’habitent...Journal des Sçavans*, vol. 12 (lundi 24 avril 1684), 148–155, 152. Reprinted in facsimile in Robert Bernasconi, ed., *Concepts of Race in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1, ‘Bernier, Linnaeus and Maupertuis’ (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2001). See also Bernasconi, ed. *Race* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 13, 25. On the possibility that Bernier’s ‘futile’ conclusion on female beauty is intended to limit the ‘explosive’ potential of the rest of his text, see Gliozzi, 478–9.

¹¹ César de Rochefort, *Dictionnaire Général et Curieux contenant les Principaux Mots et les plus usitez en la Langue Française* (Lyon: Pierre Guillimin, 1685), entry *race*, 620. Punctuation and spelling has not been modernized in French texts consulted in their seventeenth-century editions.

¹² Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel*, vol. 3 (The Hague-Rotterdam: Arnout & Reinier Leers, 1690), entry *race*, non-paginated.

¹³ *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, 2nd edition, vol. 4 (Trévoux: 1721), entry *race*, 974.

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supposed to be the first author to have used *race* as “a classificatory label for identifying human varieties organized according to physiognomy and skin colour,” as Robert Bernasconi writes.¹⁴ In his *Nouvelle Division de la Terre, par les différentes Espèces ou Races d’hommes qui l’habitent...* (1684), Bernier uses *race* as a synonym of *espèce*.¹⁵ However, while he did postulate that it could be useful towards categorizing, and “dividing” the earth, he was aware of the subjective nature of his classification.¹⁶

Les Geographes n’ont divisé jusqu’icy la Terre que par les differens Païs ou Regions qui s’y trouvent. Ce que j’ay remarqué dans les hommes en tous mes longs & frequens Voyages, m’a donné la pensée de la diviser autrement.¹⁷

While Bernier certainly considered that those differences between the “races” he identifies were of some significance, the reinforcement by some immutable order—such as later “scientific” classification—is notably absent. The term *espèce*, without its later overtones, seems to have referred as much to physical form or appearance as to some other, insurmountable category.¹⁸ Nevertheless, skin colour was among the characteristics enumerated by Bernier which led him to classify Africans as a separate *espèce*. Rather than attribute this trait directly to climate (a conclusion which, Bernier implies, was common at the time), he assumed that this was due to some *essence*.

La noirceur qui leur est essentielle, & dont la cause n’est pas l’ardeur du Soleil, comme on le pense; puis que si l’on transporte un noir & une noire d’Afrique en un Païs froid, leurs enfans ne laissent pas d’estre noirs aussi bien que tous leurs descendans jusques à ce qu’ils se marient avec des femmes blanches. Il en faut donc chercher la cause dans la contexture particulière de leur corps, ou dans

¹⁴ Bernasconi, ed., *Concepts of Race...*, vii.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ On the lack of precision in Bernier’s division, and the equation of *espèce* and *race*, see Bernasconi, ed., *Race*, 12–13.

¹⁷ Bernier, *ibid.*, 148.

¹⁸ *Espece* n.f. (XIe s., *Alexis*; lat. *species*, vue, regard). *Dictionnaire du moyen français: la Renaissance*, ed. by Algirdas Julian Greimas & Teresa Mary Keane (Paris: Larousse, 1992), 259. On *espèce*, see also Tzvetan Todorov, *Nous et les autres: La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989), 19. See also section *Races*, 111–196.

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la semence, ou dans le sang qui sont néanmoins de la même couleur que par tout ailleurs.¹⁹

For Gliozzi, Bernier's tone, "[réussissant] presque à présenter la théorie de la race comme une innocente curiosité érudite," disguises the extremely subversive overtones of polygenesis in his text.²⁰ While such overtones are somewhat implicit in Bernier's suggestion that *semence* is at the root of physical diversity, a distinct *essence* or *contexture*—even without a conclusive or authoritative definition of its origin or composition—clearly has significant divisive potential.

The manifestations of diversity in the Indian Ocean Basin might be accompanied by assertions of the radical, essential difference of its peoples. These include occasional suggestions that certain non-European populations might be descended from "la race corrompue d'Adam," the lineage of Ham, the cursed son of Noah.²¹ As Gliozzi has indicated, such suggestions, while ultimately maintaining the monogenesis of humanity, still implied an insurmountable difference between human groups (the same author writes that African peoples were consistently ascribed a Bible-based genealogy that promoted their enslavement).²² In early modern sources (sometimes far removed from the often unsophisticated observations of mariners), similarly divisive manifestations of the distinctive essence of peoples were thought to coincide with what would now be considered "ethnic" origin. These might be manifested in assertions on character traits which were linked to colour. In the early eighteenth-century *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, for example, the entry *Nègre* ascribes reputed traits such as ignorance and cowardice, and practices such as selling one's own family to vast human populations based on skin colour.²³

¹⁹ Bernier, 150. On the heritage of the reference to *semences*, see Bernasconi, ed., *Race*, 13.

²⁰ Gliozzi, 478–479. This, as the same critic points out, entails hiding 'les liens qui unissent étroitement au préadamisme la théorie raciale,' *ibid.*

²¹ Jean de Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en terre de Brésil*, ed. by Frank Lestringant (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1994); repr. of 2nd edn (Geneva: Antoine Chappin, 1580), 420–422 and footnotes. See Lestringant's introduction, 37. See also Lestringant, *Le Huguenot et le Sauvage* (Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1990), 50, 119–122. For an example in Madagascar, see Cauche, 122; in Pondicherry, see Challe, 1979, 296. On the necessity of treating Challe's evocation of biblical explanations with caution, see Chantale Payet-Meure, 'Robert Challe: La Bible à l'épreuve du voyage', in Sophie Linon-Chipon and Jean-François Guennec, ed., *Transhumances divines: Récits de voyage et religion* (Paris: PUPS, 2005), 181–197, 185.

²² Gliozzi, 481–482.

²³ *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, vol. 4, entry *Nègre*, 64.

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This may give some hint of the potential of ethnicity to reflect the socio-economic or religious distinctions between Europeans and indigenous peoples which existed, or were developing, in the Portuguese, and later, Dutch sea empires. However, the lexicon had also evolved to denote the populations originating from mixed ethnic groups. European conquests and settlements led not only to the transportation of non-European populations as a source of labour, but also to marriages or sexual encounters between Europeans and people of African, Amerindian or Asian origin. To the offspring of what is now called *métissage*, various classificatory terms were employed to explain both the origins of those of mixed parentage, and the extent to which they were mixed. As Robert Chaudenson has indicated in an article analyzing the origins of terms describing *métissage* in both French and Creole, the French term *mulâtre*, appearing from the sixteenth century, referred to a child born to black and white parents.²⁴ However, the term *métis* appeared initially to designate people of mixed European and Asian or Amerindian parentage. Nevertheless, as the same author points out, *métis* was used in at least one travel narrative as a synonym of *mulâtre*, that is, to designate the children of “hommes blancs et de femmes noires.”²⁵ Other texts hint at a conception of ethnicity in certain quarters in the seventeenth century, which demonstrates a radical fluidity; in several other travel narratives, the indigenous peoples of the Indian subcontinent are referred to as *nègres*, or *noirs*.²⁶

Seventeenth-century dictionaries reflect the problematic associations of terms describing *métissage*. While Furetière’s *Dictionnaire Universel* (1690) does not refer to the classification of ethnic groupings in its six definitions of *race*, a definition of the *métis* is furnished which demonstrates that the term could refer to the offspring of unions between two different *races* of animal.²⁷

²⁴ Robert Chaudenson, ‘Mulâtres, métis, créoles’, in *Métissages: Linguistique et Anthropologie*, vol. 2 (Saint-Denis (Réunion): L’Harmattan, 1992), 23–37.

²⁵ See François Martin de Vitré, *Description du premier voyage fait aux Indes Orientales par les François en l’an 1603* (Paris: L. Sonnius, 1604), 11. See Chaudenson, 25.

²⁶ Claude-Michel Pouchot de Chantassin, *Relation du voyage et retour des Indes orientales...* (Paris: Coignard, 1692), 136, 143; in translation to French from Dutch in Frans Jansszon Van der Heiden, *Le Naufrage du Terschelling sur les côtes du Bengale (1661)*, ed. by Henja Vlaardingerbrock & Xavier de Castro (Paris: Chandeigne, 1999), 45; Challe, 284–285; La Boullaye, 194.

²⁷ On the evolution of terms designating *métissage* through the following century, see Sylviane Albertan-Coppola, ‘La Notion de métissage à travers les dictionnaires du XVIIIème siècle’, in Jean-Claude Carpanin Marimoutou and Jean-Michel Racault, eds,

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METIS. Adj. Masc. C'est un nom que les Espagnols donnent aux enfans qui sont nez d'un Indien & d'une Espagnole, ou d'un Espagnol & d'une Indienne. On appelle aussi chiens *metis*, ceux qui sont nez de differente race, comme d'un Levron & d'une Epagneule.²⁸

Of the definition of *mulat* [*mulâtre*], the same volume notes: “ce mot est une grande injure en Espagne, & est derivé de *mulet*, animal engendré de deux differentes especes.”²⁹ While Furetière does not write that human beings can be divided into *espèces*, in turn, according to their ethnic origin, it would appear that the offensive potential of the insult derives from this animal association.³⁰ The *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* defines the adjective *métis* in the same terms as Furetière, although the term *mestif* could designate “figurément des hommes qui sont engendrez de père & mère de différente qualité, païs, couleur, ou Religion.”³¹ The children born to unions between Europeans and *Môres*, or *sauvages*, or *Indiens* were all *mestifs*,³² while the term *mulat* is reserved for those of Afro-Amerindian parentage.³³

In other words, while the term *mulâtre* applied to the children of Europeans (or Amerindians) and Africans, and *métis* applied to those born to unions between Europeans with Amerindians or Asians, a certain amount of fluidity existed within these definitions. This is demonstrated, as Sylviane Albertan-Coppola writes, by “[l’]insistance sur la polysémie des termes désignant le métis ou sur les cas de proximité sémantique.”³⁴ Both

Métissages: Littérature-Histoire, Vol. 1 (Saint-Denis (Réunion): L’Harmattan, 1992), 35–50.

²⁸ Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel*, vol. II (The Hague-Rotterdam: Arnout & Reinier Leers, 1690), entry *métis*, non-paginated. On this extract, see Albertan-Coppola, 43.

²⁹ Furetière, entry *mulat*. Absent from 1727 edition of Furetière (The Hague: 1727), though appears as *mulato* in *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, vol. 3 M-MYU (Trévoux: 1721), entry *mestif*, 357; *mulat*, *mulaistre*, ou *mulate*, 542. See Albertan-Coppola, 44.

³⁰ On the offensive potential of these terms as illustrated by early modern dictionaries, see Albertan-Coppola, 41–42.

³¹ Entry *métis* in *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, vol. 3 (Trévoux: 1721), 373; *Ibid.*, entry *mestif*, 357.

³² ‘On appelle aussi *métif*, un enfant né d’un Indien & d’une Espagnole, ou au contraire: dans le païs on appelle *crioles*.’ *Ibid.* This would imply that the *Indien* father here is of Amerindian origin.

³³ *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, vol. 3 (Trévoux: 1721), entry *métis*, 373; entry *mulat*, *mulaistre* ou *mulate*, 542.

³⁴ Albertan-Coppola, 44.

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terms were associated with the crossing of animal species, and this allowed one of them to be used as an insult.

In the sources examined in the present study, the suggestions of an essential difference between human groupings are thus to be situated within a corpus which reflects new movements of populations, as well as the response of language—with varying levels of success—to capture this difference. Bernier's interrogations about the *noirceur* of *les noirs d'Afrique* are justified by observations of the consequences of the transportation of such peoples into distant lands. In the Indian Ocean Basin, the echoes of the perception of some *essence* of human beings were not only mediated through proto-racial or biblical discourses, but through encounters with indigenous or developing hierarchies inseparable from new economic networks. French accounts demonstrate varying levels of interaction with these networks, and reflect the perspective of the peripheral observer on the cultural manifestations of hierarchies.

Stratification and divisions in the Indian Ocean Basin

Despite attempts to gain a greater share in the commercial exploitation of the Indian Ocean Basin, France played a relatively minor role within its economies throughout the seventeenth century. The ambitious mid-century settlement on Madagascar ended violently with the departure of its surviving colonists to l'île Bourbon (later La Réunion), while small *comptoirs* such as Pondicherry paled in importance before the growing might of the Dutch and English East India Companies.

Frequently writing from the perspective of outsiders to the socio-economic systems of the Indian Ocean Basin that they describe, French travellers furnish testimony on the divisions between ethnic groups, and often, the accordance of superior privilege to members of certain groups. Pyrard divides up the “peuples de Goa” into “deux sortes, ou naturels, ou étrangers.” He divides the former *sorte* into “brahmanes, canarins et curumbins, tous gentils,” with the *brahmanes* as the “maîtres & supérieurs entre les idolâtres,” and the *curumbins* the *inférieurs*. For the two lower orders, he describes the divisions in terms which stress economic roles; the *canarins* are sub-divided into two further *sortes* according to whether they carried out trade, or “métiers honnêtes,” or rather fishing, mechanical trades, or “autres choses basses.” The lowest order, the *curumbins*, however, live “comme des sauvages” and carry out “[des] choses fort viles.”³⁵

³⁵ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 568–569.

Divisions between peoples also, unsurprisingly, had a strong religious component. In an overview of the *admirable* population of Goa, Pyrard divides it into “Portugais [...], métis, Indiens, chrétiens, et grand nombre d’autres Indiens infidèles, mahométans, ou gentils, banians de Cambay, canarins de Goa, brahmanes et autres de telle condition...”³⁶ The text reflects a conception of human groupings based on both religion and ethnicity. Portuguese Christians had superior privileges; Pyrard recounts that non-Christian “étrangers indiens” who inhabited Goa were obliged to pay tribute to the Portuguese, and that (excepting “les gens des ambassadeurs”), *infidèles* did not bear arms.³⁷

However, mid-seventeenth century, François La Boullaye Le Gouz indicates the importance of divisions which appear to be based essentially on *race* (according to a conception of this term reminiscent of Rochefort and Furetière’s previously indicated definitions). La Boullaye relates that those of the “race des Bramens” who had converted to Christianity saw other Christians (Portuguese included) as *immondes*, and that they restricted their marriages to converts of the same tribe (*tribu*).³⁸ Seventeenth-century observers in Goa depict a society heavily stratified according to criteria based on birth.³⁹ Pyrard had described the “grande différence d’honneur” among the Portuguese community in Goa. The “Portugais de Portugal” are most esteemed, followed by those born in India to Portuguese parents, who are called “*castiços*, c’est-à-dire de leur caste et race.”⁴⁰ Pyrard is not alone in treating the term *caste* as a synonym of *race*, though one must again be circumspect in the use of the latter term, which refers principally to parentage.⁴¹ Below the *castiços* came those born to a Portuguese and an Indian parent, the *mestiços*, or “métis, mêlés,” (Pyrard calls them “les moindres”) while the *mulatos* “sont en pareil honneur que les métis.”⁴²

La Boullaye devotes a chapter to describing the *diversité* of the vassals of the Portuguese crown, and “leur employ suivant l’ordre de la generation.”⁴³ Reinols, or “Portugais venus du Royaume de Portugal,” had

³⁶ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 597.

³⁷ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 567–569.

³⁸ La Boullaye, 205.

³⁹ On the diverse perceptions of this classification, see C. R. Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire (1415–1825)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 62–68.

⁴⁰ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 570.

⁴¹ See also La Boullaye, 209.

⁴² Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 570–571.

⁴³ La Boullaye, 209.

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superior privileges to *Castissos* (*Castiços*, born in India of Portuguese parents):

Les Mestissos sont de plusieurs sortes, mais fort mesprisez des Reinols & Castissos, parce qu'il y a eu un peu de sang noir dans la generation de leurs ancestres, d'autant qu'un Reinol prenant pour femme une Indienne, les enfans en naissent jaunastres, puis ces jaunastres se marians avec des personnes blanches, les enfans en naissent blancs, & à la troisieme & quatrieme generation, ils sont aussi blancs que les Reinols & Castissos, mais la tache d'avoir eu pour ancestre une Indienne, leur demeure jusques à la centiesme generation: ils peuvent toutefois estre soldats & Capitaines de forteresses ou de vaisseaux, s'ils font profession de suivre les armes, & s'ils se jettent du costé de l'Eglise ils peuvent estre Lecteurs, mais non Provinciaux.

Les Karanes sont engendrez d'un Mestis, & d'une Indienne, lesquels sont olivastres. Ce mot de Karanes vient à mon advis de Kara, qui signifie en Turq la terre, ou bien la couleur noire, comme si l'on vouloit dire par Karanes, les enfans du païs, ou bien les noirs: ils ont les mesmes avantages dans leur profession que les autres Mestis.⁴⁴

La Boullaye's depiction of the visible manifestations of origin through skin colour may in part be considered alongside his other *observations* as essentially curious manifestations of human diversity. However, his focus on the determination of one's place in the socio-economic hierarchy according to bloodline hints, again, at the potentially problematic nature of *métissage*. While physical difference between the *métis* and the Portuguese settler or the descendent of Portuguese parents might disappear after several generations, those "stained" by non-European blood could not aspire to the highest positions in Goa.

Such accounts of the importance of factors of birth or *race* in the early modern colonial economies of the Indian Ocean Basin accompany depictions of various types of human servitude, frequently in the form of slavery. In the first decade of the seventeenth century, Pyrard vividly describes the slave market in Goa, where slaves are led "comme on fait [en France] des chevaux," and writes that there was "un nombre infiny, et de

⁴⁴ La Boullaye, 209.

toutes [les] nations Indiennes.”⁴⁵ Studies by M. N. Pearson and Sanjay Subrahmanyam testify to the large-scale use of slave labour; it has been reported that during the early modern period, while Portugal had a higher percentage of slaves than any other European country, Goa had even more.⁴⁶ Pyrard’s description of the display of servitude when a Portuguese gentleman would pass through the streets of Goa vividly reflects this. The gentleman, on horseback or carried in a palanquin, and shaded by a parasol carried by a slave, would be followed on foot by pages, lackeys, and a great number of slave *estafiers* wearing livery.⁴⁷ In a voyage made from 1617 to 1627, the Swiss captain Élie Ripon claims to have observed numerous slaves (“esclaves noirs”) in Macao, who had been brought through the seat of the Portuguese empire in Goa; it is unclear if these slaves were of African or Indian origin.⁴⁸

Certain texts hint at the association between the use of terms indicating servitude and those indicating ethnic origin. In a text published in 1651, Cauche mentions encountering the members of a Dutch slaving expedition on Madagascar, who had been left there by their captain “pour y achepter des Negres, & les transporter en l’Isle Maurice, & au Bresil.”⁴⁹ This also appears to have been reflected in the future La Réunion which, by the start of the eighteenth century, was becoming dependent for its successful exploitation on slavery. A text bequeathed by the administrator Antoine Boucher lists instances of *possession* of a multitude of *noirs* and *négresses* (themselves apparently also “possessed” by *mulâtres* and even *négresses*).⁵⁰

While the notions of *achat* and *possession* unambiguously constitute enslavement, Europeans who wrote about their encounters with unfamiliar

⁴⁵ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 590–591; 571.

⁴⁶ M. N. Pearson, *The New Cambridge History of India*, I: 1, *The Portuguese in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 15; 95. Subrahmanyam gives a seventeenth-century estimate of approximately ten slaves per *casado* household. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: a Political and Economic History*, 2nd ed. (Chichester; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 240.

⁴⁷ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 598.

⁴⁸ ‘Ils tiennent grande quantité d’esclaves noirs qu’ils amènent de Goa.’ Élie Ripon, *Voyages et aventures aux Grandes Indes, 1617–1627*, ed. by Yves Giraud (Paris: Les Éditions de Paris, 1997), 93.

⁴⁹ Cauche, 37. On the colonial project in Madagascar, see M. Harrigan, *Veiled Encounters: Representing the Orient in Seventeenth-Century French Travel Literature* (Amsterdam; NY: Rodopi, 2008), 219–224; Linon-Chipon, *passim*.

⁵⁰ Antoine Boucher, *Mémoire pour servir à la connoissance particulière de chacun des habitans de l’Isle de Bourbon*, notes by Père Jean Barassin, Collection Mascarin, (Saint-Clothilde (Réunion): Éditions ARS Terres Créoles, 1989), 80, 86, 97.

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societies elsewhere recount the existence of hierarchies which curiously reflect existing, familiar hierarchies. When Cauche, on Madagascar, is asked to carry out tasks such as the sacrifice of animals, his reflex is to interpret this as a deference which is directly related both to religion and to skin colour:

S'il y a un Chrestien parmy eux, ils le prient de faire cet office, je ne sçay par quelle defference, mais ils m'ont fait faire souvent ce mestier, je croy que c'estoit parce que je n'y prenois aucune part, ou parce que les blancs sont les maistres de l'isle, & que ceux-là mesme qui sont blancs, qui se disent venir des Indes Orientales, respectent les Europeans, comme estant plus blancs qu'ils ne sont. A cette cause ils appellent le Chrestien, *Vaza*, c'est-à-dire tres-blanc, defferant tant à ce mot, qu'ils appellèrent une petite fontaine que j'avois fait passer par des cors dans ma maison à Mannhale *Rame Vaza*, qui veut dire la fontaine du Chrestien, ou du blanc.⁵¹

Here, Cauche depicts *blancheur* as the marker of authority, as well as being a phenomenon subject to its own internal hierarchy (to judge by the respect he claims Europeans were afforded). Whiteness is also synonymous with Christianity, itself a source of indigenous deference. The later governor of Madagascar, Etienne de Flacourt, claimed that its inhabitants were distinguished by categories, the black-skinned inhabitants being divided into four and the white-skinned into three such *sortes*, respectively.⁵² The iconography of Flacourt's account reinforces the representation of such hierarchy, with one illustration depicting "*Un Rohandrian avec sa Femme portée par ses Esclaves Lors qu'elle va en Visite par le País.*"⁵³ Such depictions of a stratified Malagasy indigenous society must be read with some caution, as they reflect different, potentially problematic, levels of contact—and sometimes conflict—with indigenous peoples. They also reflect the ordering or classification of peoples in budding colonial systems, both East and West, which were to be subject to varying levels of infringement of that classification.

⁵¹ Cauche, 122.

⁵² Flacourt, 47.

⁵³ Non-paginated illustration in Flacourt.

Encountering *métissage*

The French observers who are the focus of the present study were witnesses to the development of dynamic coastal settlements and economies, and often testify to the mutations, or the potentially fragile political equilibrium, of these societies. The socio-economic hierarchies they describe were subject to the mixing of populations, which generated a variety of cultural responses. Over time, Creole society would develop diverse responses to such mixing of populations, as evinced for example, by the social and economic connotations of those terms indicating colour or ethnic origin.⁵⁴ In the seventeenth century, the status of the *métis* might allow them to share many of the privileges of the white population; the *métis* might, for example, act as a source of authority in settlements with a numerically superior black slave population.⁵⁵

Texts describing servitude bear witness to the potential tensions within an order built on a problematic social stratification. As part of a large French expedition in the early 1690s, Robert Challe encounters a large black (as well as a *métis*) population on the islands of Cape Verde. An often unsympathetic observer, Challe claims that the black population were characterized by “un esprit [...] servile”; deriding their “bassesse d’âme,” he writes that they were barely distinguishable from brutes.⁵⁶ His account of his own experience of the servitude of a *nègre* over two days hints at the tensions inherent in such servitude. He is informed, for example, that had he paid his servitor upon demand, he would have been promptly deserted (and not having seen the same individual once payment was made constitutes proof of this for Challe).⁵⁷ There is a somewhat uneasy tone in Challe’s brief account of the coexistence of Europeans, *métis* and *noirs*:

Les Européens [...] sont en fort petit nombre, n’étant au plus que quarante, tant officiers de justice que d’épée, les

⁵⁴ See Chaudenson’s 1974 article for the nuances of vocabulary to describe colour in three colonies previously dominated by the French. ‘Le Noir et le Blanc: La Classification Raciale dans les Parlers Créoles de l’Océan Indien’, *Revue de Linguistique Romane*, janvier-décembre 1974 [no. 149], 75–94.

⁵⁵ On white-*métis* economic competition in eighteenth-century *Saint-Domingue* see Yves Benot, *La Révolution française et la fin des colonies* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1988), 60–61. On the *métis* as an ‘esclave civilisé et robuste’ see Linon-Chipon, 452.

⁵⁶ Challe, 138.

⁵⁷ ‘Il semble que ces noirs n’ont que la figure humaine, qui les distingue de la brute, une bassesse d’âme dans toutes leurs actions que je ne puis exprimer. Le gain fait sur eux ce qu’un morceau de pain fait sur un chien affamé.’ Challe, 138.

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créoles ou métis étant presque tous soldats & les autres de métier; auxquels tous il importe de maintenir l'autorité du gouverneur, puisque c'est elle qui fait leur sûreté contre les noirs, qui sont en bien plus grand nombre, mais à la vérité d'un esprit si servile & si abject qu'ils ne sont pas à craindre.⁵⁸

The last affirmation is curiously ambiguous; the assurance that the *noirs* were *not* to be feared nonetheless hints at the presumption of a notion of *crainte* in such a society. Despite Challe's reassurance, this extract hints at some assumption, among observers and perhaps readers, of an undercurrent of tension in the relationship between peoples in this community.

Elsewhere in the Indian Ocean Basin, settlement patterns parallel those Chantal Maignan-Claverie has described in the case of the *Antilles*, with a great shortage of families—and of marriageable women—willing to make the voyage to the colonies, even years after their initial settlement.⁵⁹ In the East, European settlement was also predominately a masculine affair; Pearson writes that the “vast majority” of Portuguese settlers took their wives from among local women.⁶⁰ Charles Boxer writes that in the early days of Goa, marriage with converted women of Aryan origin had been encouraged by the conqueror Albuquerque.⁶¹ For Pearson, this initial Portuguese pattern of marriage follows a different pattern to later European settlements in the East.⁶² However, with some estimates putting forward annual figures of perhaps two thousand Portuguese leaving for sixteenth-century India (“mostly for Goa”) and between six and eight thousand men leaving for Asia in the service of the Dutch VOC during the years of its existence (to speak of only two European countries), other forms of alliance between autochthons and male Europeans are reflected in contemporary texts.⁶³

Portuguese culture in the Indian Ocean Basin itself became subject to a considerable amount of acculturation concerning alimentary habits or ap-

⁵⁸ Challe, 138.

⁵⁹ Maignan-Claverie, 130–131; 220–221.

⁶⁰ Pearson, 104–105.

⁶¹ Boxer, 64.

⁶² Pearson, 104.

⁶³ The statistics for Portuguese departures are from Pearson, 92; those concerning the VOC in Dirk Van der Cruysse, ed., *Mercenaires français de la VOC: le récit de Jean Guidon de Chambelle (1644–1651) & autres documents* (Paris: Chandeigne, 2003), 21. See Pyard, 1998, vol. 2, 591 and La Boullaye (209–210; 262) on master-slave relations in Goa. See Boxer, 60–62 on the situation in the sixteenth-century Portuguese possessions.

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pearance, even becoming predominantly Indian in “racial terms,” according to Pearson in the case of Goa.⁶⁴ The French texts which were generated from the encounter with this Indo-Portuguese composite culture reflect its *métissage*, as well as its divisions.⁶⁵ They recount the ambiguous social status of those who crossed European and Asian cultures. This social status is illustrated by Leonard Y. Andaya, writing of the cities of Southeast Asia in which the *métis* constituted a sizeable presence by the late seventeenth century:

These mestizo children were socially located between the cultures of their foreign fathers and their Southeast Asian mothers, and not totally accepted by either. Yet their very presence half-way between these societies made them ideal intermediaries in trade, diplomacy, and in the transmission of ideas between the two cultures.⁶⁶

This lack of acceptance, at least by European cultures, is demonstrated by the most fleeting of references testifying to their “mixed” status.⁶⁷ The vague assertion made by the Abbé Carré is representative:

Je m'embarquai sur la galiote du capitaine Salvador George, Portugais indien, homme bien fait, de cœur, mais un peu bohémien de visage et de naturel indien.⁶⁸

Clearly, Carré's host was irreproachable, *except for* his appearance (his dark skin) and his vaguely Indian *naturel*, or character. The gipsylike (*bohémien*) appearance indicates that Carré's host was in fact a *castiço*, as Dirk Van der Cruysse points out, or a *métis*.⁶⁹ Acculturation, displayed by the Indian *naturel*, is accompanied by a hint of physical difference reminiscent of a distinct ethnic group familiar to the French reader (the

⁶⁴ Ripon, 93; Pearson, 101.

⁶⁵ ‘Le géolier et sa femme étaient métis.’ Pyard, 1998, vol. 2, 540.

⁶⁶ Leonard Y. Andaya, ‘Interactions with the Outside World and Adaptation in Southeast Asian Society, 1500–1800’, in *The Cambridge History of South-East Asia*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 345–401, 371.

⁶⁷ Linon-Chipon quotes the *Docteur* Dellon, and the ambassador Chaumont who, while noting the considerable numbers of *métis* in late-century Goa and Siam respectively, distinguish them from the *véritables Portugais*. Charles Dellon, *Nouvelle Voyage aux Indes Orientales* (Amsterdam: Paul Marret, 1699), 208; Alexandre de Chaumont, *Relation de l’Ambassade de Mr le Chevalier de Chaumont à la Cour du Roy de Siam* (The Hague: Isaac Beaugard, 1733), 84. See Linon-Chipon, 450.

⁶⁸ Carré, 505.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

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Bohémiens), one which was itself perceived as socially problematic.⁷⁰ Elsewhere, the *Abbé's* text reflects a difference in social status, determined by birth, which had been described by La Boullaye. Carré perceives a *bas-sesse* which further distinguished the characters of *Portugais indiens* and *Portugais européens*:

Le sieur Gaspar de Sousa, Portugais européen [...] était sans contredit le plus honnête Portugais que j'eusse connu dans les Indes, homme d'honneur, généreux, et qui n'avait rien de bas ni qui ressentît les Portugais indiens.⁷¹

As Carré's description of the captain Salvador George has demonstrated, however, the mention of the colour of the *métis* reflects concerns which transcend manifestations of social divisions. The appearance of the *métis* in the text might, of course, also be considered as another element of the diversity of the *Grandes Indes*, a diversity which was the *raison d'être* of the travel narrative. For example, Ripon's description of the Portuguese in Macao focuses on a physical particularity of *métissage*:

[Les Portugais] trafiquent tous les jours ensemble, et se marient avec des femmes chinoises, aussi sont-ils la plupart camus comme les Chinois.⁷²

However, there is evidence in certain French texts of a concern with the transmission of *sang* through *métissage* which reflects the question of *race*. La Boullaye praises the appearance of the Parsi population in India precisely because of their tradition of only marrying within their community, thus conserving the traits of their *sang*:

Ils ne s'allient qu'avec ceux de leur loy & nation, qui est la raison pourquoy ils ont conservé la blancheur & la beauté de leur sang dans les Indes, & autres lieux où ils ont fuy, parce que la blancheur ne vient nullement du climat, mais de la semence des parens.⁷³

Another mid-century author, the ecclesiastic Philippe de la Très-Sainte Trinité, writes that the constant arrival in Goa of young Portuguese men, who marry *Mistice* women, means that "peu à peu les races se purifient."⁷⁴

⁷⁰ See for example the entry *Bohémien*, in *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, vol. 1 (Trévoux: 1721), 1085–1086.

⁷¹ Carré, 1032.

⁷² Ripon, 93.

⁷³ La Boullaye, 189.

⁷⁴ 'Tous les ans arrivant aux Indes des jeunes Portugais, qui se marient avec les filles *Mistiques*, peu à peu les races se purifient.' Philippe de la Très-Saint Trinité, 1669, 134.

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This *purification* of the *métis* population consists of a progressive dilution of the *noirceur* which is inherited, he states, from Indian mothers.⁷⁵ The conservation of the bloodline or the gradual attenuation of *métissage* are considered laudable in these two mid-century texts.

The encounter with the East also reflects a concern with the effects of climate and environment on human beings. In the late seventeenth century, Challe's account of the early settlement of Pondicherry describes a *métis* population which had preserved its *blancheur*.

Il y a plusieurs Français mariés à des filles portugaises, qui ne sont pas noires, mais métisses ou mulâtres, & dont les enfants sont blonds & d'une peau aussi blanche que les Européens les plus délicats.⁷⁶

This *délicatesse*, in the context of La Boullaye and Philippe's previously-mentioned observations, must surely have been considered a positive result of *métissage*. However, Challe also claims that the majority of the French officers and soldiers in the settlement had been irredeemably corrupted to the point of being unable to return to Europe. The reason for this was a frequentation of prostitutes which left them, he claims, "salés & poivrés". Weak, thin and *hideux*, the paleness of their skin, which made them resemble "des nouveaux Lazares, ou du moins des moines de Notre-Dame de la Trappe," is in this instance the visible sign of a physical corruption.⁷⁷ While Challe does furnish some remarkable, apparently first-hand, testimony of prostitution, his "nouveaux Lazares" may also reflect an association between European residence in the Orient and physical degradation, or the loss of what Europeans considered to be their superior level of vigour.⁷⁸ Given the survival of the belief in a link between climate and character, this would imply that *métissage* consisted of the mix of European with the product of an environment supposed to impart weakness and other negative traits.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Challe, 288.

⁷⁷ Challe, 287.

⁷⁸ See La Boullaye, 257. On La Boullaye and links between climate, vigour and *valeur*, see my *Veiled Encounters*, 207–208. However, John Fryer reports in the 1670s that children born in India to English mothers were 'a sickly generation' and that, according to the Dutch, '[children] thrive better that come of a *European* Father and *Indian* Mother.' John Fryer, *John Fryer's East India and Persia*, vol. 1, ed. by William Crooke (Hakluyt Society: 1909), repr. (Millwood, NY: Kraus Reprint, 1967), 179.

⁷⁹ On climate and character, see Charles-Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu, *De L'Esprit des lois*, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. II, ed. by Roger Caillois, Éditions de la Pléiade (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1951), 478. For one curious (and briefly, positive) depiction of

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Seventeenth-century reflections of *métissage* also circulate in texts which inspire questions on the claim to first-hand testimony, or on the role of intertextuality. A notable and frequent topos is that of the receptivity of the Asian population to the sexual favours of European men.⁸⁰ These might be claimed to be the result of first-hand experience; Mocquet, for example, claims that an Indian woman brought her daughter “pour coucher avec [lui],” and that his refusal caused the girl considerable upset.⁸¹ The extremely influential and near-contemporaneous account of the East Indies by the Dutchman Linschoten includes a passage which recounts the desire of servants to give birth to white-skinned children:

Les meres de tels enfants quelque grande que soit leur povreté & servitude, ne voudroyent pas avoir pensé à les meurtrir ou estouffer, ains tiennent pour gloire non petite d’avoir esté engrossies d’un homme blanc, & pourtant gardent soigneusement leurs enfants, & ne les lairroyent pas mesmes à leurs propres peres quand ils les voudroyent avoir pour argent.⁸²

Pyrard, depicting the market at Goa, claims that slaves acted as *maquerelles* for their mistresses. The alliance with a European would be considered honorable:

Toutes ces Indiennes, tant chrétiennes qu’autres ou métisses, désirent plutôt avoir la compagnie d’un homme de l’Europe vieux-chrétien que des Indiens, et leur

métissage, see Flacourt’s depiction of a mixed French-Malagasy Christian population in the *dédicace* of his *Histoire* (non-paginated), and my article ‘*Trahison and the Native: Flacourt’s Histoire de la Grande Isle Madagascar (1658)*’ in *Reverberations: Staging Relations in French since 1500. A Festschrift in Honour of C.E.J. Caldicott*, ed. by P. Gaffney, M. Brophy, & M. Gallagher (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2008), 315–326.

⁸⁰ Ripon, 148; L’Estra, 77, 84; Pouchot, 174; see Linon-Chipon, 477–495.

⁸¹ ‘Il y eut une Indienne qui m’amena sa fille pour coucher avec moi, comme le mainate l’avait avertie; mais cette fille âgée seulement de treize ans, voyant que je ne la voulais pas toucher, se prit à pleurer et gémir, voulant à toute force que j’eusse affaire avec elle, et sa mère faisait ce qu’elle pouvait pour l’apaiser, moi ne sachant pourquoi se faisait tout ce mystère.’ Mocquet, 1996, 102. Footnote in 1996 edition: ‘*Mainate (mainato)*: membre de la caste des blanchisseurs, laquelle est exclusivement chargée du lavage et empesage du linge.’

⁸² Annotation by Bernard Paludanus in Jan Huyghen Van Linschoten, *Histoire de la navigation de Jean Hugues de Linschot Hollandois, aux Indes Orientales* (Amsterdam: Henry Laurent, 1610), 87.

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donneraient plutôt de l'argent, s'en tenant bien honorées: car elles aiment fort les hommes blancs de deçà, et encore qu'il y ait des Indiens fort blancs, elles ne les aiment pas tant.⁸³

According to Pyrard, skin colour alone cannot justify the preference for Europeans; the choice of the European may indeed, as Sophie Linon-Chipon writes in relation to this extract, be determined by religious confession.⁸⁴ However, while not as flagrant as in Linschoten, there may also be a suggestion that it is the origin of the European—some inherent essence distinguishing him from Indians—that determines this preference. Both extracts dismiss any hint of economic interest in the desire for the *compagnie* of a European, and in Linschoten, the *métis* is a source of glory in having inherited the essence of the *homme blanc*.

Linschoten and Pyrard's assertions are also at the cusp of fiction and must surely demonstrate the potential for the encounter between diverse cultures to fascinate, even to generate fantasy among the male authorship. The coexistence of stratified groups within these colonial societies was recognized by certain authors to be the site of tensions, and of unresolved and possibly emergent conflicts. Others hint at the value of preserving an essence conceived of, at times, in an apparently fluid manner, and encompassing lineage, colour, and religion. *Métissage* was clearly encountered, but as the following section will demonstrate, was also reflected in the development of more elaborate narratives in which the promise and the perils of breaching divisions were reflected.

***Métissage* and cautionary tales**

The textual provision of supposedly empirical evidence in travel narratives to the Indian Ocean Basin was often accompanied by anecdotes recounting dramatic and violent occurrences or sexual transgressions.⁸⁵ Figuring alongside descriptions of the political organization or the religion of eastern cultures, these tales reflect hearsay, or hypotexts from a corpus which included other travel narratives.⁸⁶

⁸³ Pyrard, vol. 2, 592. On this extract, and on the Occidental as a 'produit de choix', see Linon-Chipon, 490.

⁸⁴ Linon-Chipon, 490.

⁸⁵ The theme of these 'oriental' anecdotes is discussed in greater detail in my *Veiled Encounters*, esp. 237–252.

⁸⁶ I use Genette's definition of the *hypotext*. See Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 13. See for example Tavernier, *Recueil de plusieurs Relations...; Histoire de la Conduite des Hollandois en Asie*.

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Manifestations of *métissage* within such anecdotes demonstrate a strong moral focus. Like other popular European anecdotal forms, they are often explicitly cautionary, and demonstrate the inevitable punishment of sin, or astonish the reader by their outlandishness.⁸⁷ In such forms, the phenomenon of *métissage*, when it is encountered, sometimes retreats into the background as one more detail in a curious, or cautionary, tale. Pyrard, for example, furnishes a vivid account of the physical suffering endured by a *mulâtre* as punishment for his crimes, in a chapter alongside “justices diverses” or the “humeur amoureuse des femmes indiennes.”⁸⁸ However, this anecdote is notable as an account of exceptional human courage, but makes no explicit link between this trait and ethnic origin.⁸⁹ In another case, the tragic fate of a young *métis* shipwrecked in the Maldives who rises in the esteem of the people by his bravery, is considered by Pyrard as a lesson on the dangers of rising above one’s station both in those islands and elsewhere.⁹⁰ So, while the constant indication of a character’s status as *métis* indicates that it is an inescapable, distinct, category, the principal dramatic or moral value of some tales cannot be attributed with certainty to this status.

Nevertheless, *métissage* also features as an element in cautionary anecdotes which invite a reading in the context of the existing proto-colonial order. A number of French accounts refer to the druggings of Europeans by Orientals either to permit infidelity or to take revenge on lovers who wish to leave them.⁹¹ Pyrard warns against the terrible jealousy of *métisse* and Indian women, and Mocquet attributes deceit and drugging to the *métisses* in particular (the fact that both travellers had the same ghost writer, Pierre Bergeron, is no doubt not indifferent).⁹² La Boullaye (who had read

⁸⁷ French forms include those of François de Belleforest, *Histoires Tragiques...*, 7 vols (Rouen: Pierre L’Oyselet, 1603), or of Jean-Pierre Camus, *L’Amphitheatre Sanglant...* (Paris: Joseph Cottereau, 1630); repr. (Rouen: Jean de la Mare, 1640); repr. ed. by Stéphan Ferrari (Paris: Champion, 2001). See also Christian Biet’s *Théâtre de la cruauté et récits sanglants en France (XVI^e–XVII^e siècle)* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006).

⁸⁸ Chapter XXII, *Justices diverses faites pour adultères, paillardises & autres péchés. Humeur amoureuse des femmes indiennes. Du grand pandiare, & de la résolution étrange d’un mulâtre*, Pyrard, 1998, vol. 1, 282–289.

⁸⁹ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 1, 287.

⁹⁰ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 1, 241.

⁹¹ On the heritage of these accounts, see editor’s note (111, footnote 1) in Mocquet, 1996, 215–218; On ‘oriental’ drugging see also my *Veiled Encounters*, 244–248.

⁹² Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 645. For this and other examples of *amour exotique dangereux*, see also Linon-Chipon, 499–500; Mocquet, 1996, 111. On Bergeron’s editing of Mocquet and Pyrard, see Grégoire Holtz, *L’Ombre de l’auteur: Pierre Bergeron et l’écriture du voyage à la fin de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2011), 277–320; on the datura

both Pyrard and Mocquet) vividly depicts similar intrigues in Goa between Portuguese soldiers and “les femmes des autres Portugais, ou mestisses, qui aiment à faire l’amour au dessus de toutes les femmes du monde.”⁹³ All three narrators repeat the topos of the amorous temperament of Orientals (and indeed, of the Portuguese women in the East), and in this, the *métisse* inherits traits attributed to her sisters of other origin. Indeed, for Mocquet and La Boullaye, she supersedes others both in her level of skill in carrying out her deceit, and/or in her amorous temperament. This may, as Linon-Chipon writes, be as much a condemnation of women as of the *métis(se)*, in which “la femme métisse, [...] avant d’être métisse, est femme.”⁹⁴ However, the *métisse* is also an intermediary accessing the products of the East to harm the European world of which she too is, in part, a member.

Mocquet’s narrative also implicates the *métisse* in vivid descriptions of the brutality of the Portuguese colonial empire, and of great abuses carried out on the slaves in Goa. The barbaric punishment inflicted by one *métisse* on a slave for her lack of promptitude in waking up, proves fatal, and the “horribles châtements” of another “fait mourir de la sorte cinq ou six esclaves qu’elle faisait enterrer en son jardin.”⁹⁵ The implication of the *métisse* in such graphic excess appears to reflect on her status in the colony. When this part-European, part-Oriental occupied the position of authority that owning slaves implied, she is strikingly depicted as unable to restrain herself and temper its reasonable use.

Mocquet’s narrative contains two other tales which are representative of another reason why such tales could fascinate. Among the many unfortunate characters the narrator met in his travels was the son of an “Ethiopian king,” whose skin colour aroused suspicion in his father: “Il était fils d’un Noir et d’une Noire, et néanmoins était blanc et blond.”⁹⁶ The apothecary Mocquet speculates that this anomaly was caused by *la fantaisie*: through the mother “imagining” the whites who she had heard lived in Mozambique, or some other vivid psychological impression.⁹⁷ In a

druggings see 415; on Bergeron’s critiques of Portuguese colonial policy in Asia, see 167; 291.

⁹³ La Boullaye, 279.

⁹⁴ Linon-Chipon, 450. The condemnations of Pyrard, Mocquet and La Boullaye do, nonetheless, predate the early eighteenth-century voyager Lullier who, Linon-Chipon suggests, is among the first to condemn *métissage* [ibid.].

⁹⁵ ‘Il y avait une métisse qui avait par ces horribles châtements fait mourir de la sorte cinq ou six esclaves qu’elle faisait enterrer en son jardin.’ Mocquet, 112–113.

⁹⁶ Mocquet, 1996, 72.

⁹⁷ Mocquet, 1996, 73.

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second tale, Mocquet recounts the consequences of a Genoese woman giving birth to a black child after suffering another psychological impression; this time her anger at a black female slave falling pregnant by another slave. Her husband's belief that he is the victim of adultery gives rise to numerous peripeteia, such as the exposure of the child in the wilderness, an eventual chance encounter of father and son in a market in Algiers, and their tragic end.⁹⁸ The great dramatic interest of Mocquet's tales must be considered within the overall context of the thematic and moral preoccupations of the *histoires tragico-maritimes*, and they depend on the early modern conception of the power of the imagination to mark the unborn child.⁹⁹ Yet, both also demonstrate an important implication of *métissage*. The suspected infidelity from which both derive their dramatic interest is actualized by the ineffaceable sign of colour. Moral transgression—even if falsely imputed—is assumed to have been made visible.

This visibility and exposure of moral transgression is a theme adopted in French accounts of the Dutch East Indies, but in forms which also reflect contemporary perceptions of socio-economic hierarchies. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier's account of *La Conduite des Hollandois en Asie* contains a chapter entitled *De l'Orgueil des femmes de Batavia, de leur credit & de leurs amourettes*. Tavernier depicts Batavia as a site of considerable and undesirable social mobility, a place to which "des filles de la lie du peuple" were principally brought.¹⁰⁰ Once married, Tavernier claims, these women, bejewelled and "servies par plusieurs esclaves de l'un & de l'autre sexe" developed an excessive pride and insolence. The *amourettes* which Tavernier claims they embark on with young men recently arrived from Holland reflects the promiscuity attributed by Mocquet and Pyrard to their Portuguese sisters nearly three-quarters of a century previously. Tavernier sets the scene for an anecdote with a moral assertion which frames the story in a cautionary manner:

Le plus souvent quand les femmes s'imaginent que
leurs amours sont fort secrètes & qu'on n'en peut rien sça-

⁹⁸ Mocquet, 1996, 73–74.

⁹⁹ As Jean Céard writes: 'qu'est-ce que l'imagination de la femme enceinte, sinon la faculté de projeter dans le corps de son enfant l'image d'autres créatures?' Jean Céard, in Ambroise Paré, *Des Monstres & Prodiges*, 4th edition (1585), repr. ed. by Jean Céard (Genève: Droz, 1971), XXXIX. See also Paré's chapter *Exemple de Monstres qui se font par Imagination*, 35–37.

¹⁰⁰ Tavernier, 148.

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voir, c'est alors que Dieu permet qu'elles sont plutôt découvertes & mesme avec beaucoup d'infamie.¹⁰¹

He recounts that the Dutch wife of the secretary of the Hospital in Batavia had been childless for several years, and, despairing of ever having children, turns her attention to a slave who was "bien fait mais fort noir." Her eventual pregnancy is greeted with great, but short-lived joy by her husband:

À l'accouchement toute cette joye fut changée en deuil,
& l'on fut fort surpris de voir un enfant noir qu'elle mit au monde....¹⁰²

The child, in this tale, bears the visible mark of the deceit of the mother, a deceit which transgresses both socio-economic and ethnic boundaries, and which is severely punished; the father is dispatched on the galleys afterward. Here, a multiple transgression is made irrevocably visible in a form reminiscent of what Robert J. C. Young characterizes as the *subversive* body of the child born from "hybrid" sexual unions.¹⁰³

However, in the case of a transgressive union in which the father was European, Tavernier presents a notably less subversive outcome. He suggests that one of those who attempted to have the secretary take back his wife, may have related a *conte* concerning a *noir* and a *noire*. In this tale, the wife gives birth to an "enfant blanc," the father probably being "quelque soldat Portugais."¹⁰⁴ The great anger of the cuckolded husband is appeased by the arrival of a priest, who comforts him simply by recounting how a black hen might lay white eggs:

Par cette comparaison la colère du Cafre s'appaisa, il fut embrasser la mère & l'enfant, & il ne se parla plus de la chose.¹⁰⁵

The resolution of this tale differs greatly from that preceding it in verging on the comic, either by the facility of the priest's explanation, or by the ease with which it is accepted by the husband.

¹⁰¹ Tavernier, 151.

¹⁰² Tavernier, 152.

¹⁰³ 'The identification of racial with sexual degeneracy was clearly always overdetermined in those whose subversive bronzed bodies bore witness to a transgressive act of perverse desire.' Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London; NY: Routledge, 1995), 26.

¹⁰⁴ Tavernier, 153.

¹⁰⁵ Tavernier, 154.

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Tavernier's first anecdote hints not only at the seriousness of the transgression of adultery in the new European settlements in Asia, but also of the dramatic potential that narratives of such *métissage* might have. This potential is developed in another anecdote, which features in the account of the service of the mid-seventeenth-century mercenary, Jean Guidon de Chambelle, with the Dutch East India Company. Introduced by the title *Histoire d'une femme hollandaise qui eut affaire avec son esclave, & de la justice qu'on en fit*, the cautionary nature is made immediately clear. In the absence of her husband, a young and high-born European woman in the colony calls one of her slaves, "un des plus contrefaits de la nature et le plus sauvage, ni autrement avait quelque esprit" into her room.¹⁰⁶ Her expressions of affection astonish her slave, who initially refuses her advances, which include the following affirmation of the superiority of the colonist:

Regarde comme je suis blanche et toi noir, et quel honneur je te fais, dont tu devrais être glorieux. Oui, je te promets (mets la main dans la mienne), pourvu que tu sois secret, de t'affranchir et te donner des esclaves qui te serviront, te faisant riche.¹⁰⁷

In this case, the transgression of the boundaries of colour is conceived of as an honour for which the slave must be grateful (as Linschoten wrote of slaves in Goa).¹⁰⁸ Yet the result of this confusion of existing limits is that the previous submission of the slave is turned into scorn for the master who was encouraged to free him: "Cet esclave, étant en franchise [...] commença à se méconnaître et à mépriser celui qui l'avait affranchi."¹⁰⁹ The bestowal of social mobility, enabled by deceit and adultery and blurring ethnic divisions, clearly brings confusion to the colonial order.¹¹⁰ The text places the transgression alongside the most serious and hidden of all, and promises that punishment must surely follow: "Comme les choses les plus cachées se découvrent avec le temps, Dieu ne laisse jamais rien impuni."¹¹¹ Indeed, the sentences initially received—death for the wife, and a symbolic mutilation and re-enslavement of the *Noir*—demonstrate the seriousness of this crossing of boundaries. This is finally commuted to a

¹⁰⁶ Chambelle, 157.

¹⁰⁷ Chambelle, 158.

¹⁰⁸ Linschoten, 1610, 87. Quoted above on page 37.

¹⁰⁹ Chambelle, 158.

¹¹⁰ Dellon also writes that the 'servitude plus douce' of slaves at Goa causes them to become insolent, and even to engage in robbery. Dellon, 209–210.

¹¹¹ Chambelle, 158.

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severe punishment which, for the woman, includes a symbolic execution, the annulment of her marriage, and her exclusion from society.

Elle serait mise pour toute sa vie au *spinus*, qui est un lieu où on met les femmes de mauvais gouvernement. Et pour cet affranchi, qu'il demanderait pardon à son maître, disant qu'il avait été forcé; après serait fouetté, et esclave pour toute sa vie de la Compagnie.¹¹²

A short report immediately follows this tale of, this time, a *femme mestive* who deceives her Dutch husband with a *Noir*.¹¹³ While the considerable dramatic interest and the dialogues of the first tale are absent, it demonstrates the abhorrence with which this combined infringement of race, marriage, and class was viewed. The fate of this second couple, while devoid of certain elements of the first, includes a severe physical punishment for both.

Elle fut dé mariée d'avec son mari, eut le fouet et la marque, et condamnée trois ans au *spinus*, et le Noir eut le fouet et la marque, et fait esclave pour sa vie à la Compagnie.¹¹⁴

Ultimately, despite their differences, the cautionary thread in these tales is apparent. While Mocquet's anecdotes are in some cases simple transpositions of the theme of (supposed) adultery made visible by skin colour, others testify to the ambiguous perception of *métissage* and the *métis(se)*, situated between cultures and the hierarchies of the colony. For Chambelle and Tavernier, the theme of adultery is accompanied by vivid demonstrations of the consequences of the disruption of the colonial order. When European women infringe its barriers with the same sexual licence traditionally attributed to European males in the Indies, an inevitable punishment dramatically reaffirms the existing hierarchy.

Conclusion

The travel narratives examined in the present study reflect the attempt to encapsulate difference in recognizable forms of text, and the interactions of contemporary—potentially widely disseminated—formulations of

¹¹² Chambelle, 159. On this voyage and the 'conclusion du pur style "colonial"' of this extract, see François Moureau, *Le Théâtre des voyages: une scénographie de l'Âge classique* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2005), 111–112.

¹¹³ Chambelle, 159.

¹¹⁴ Chambelle, 159. The *spinus* was a 'Maison de correction pour femmes', note by D. Van der Cruysse in Chambelle, 269.

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human difference with intertextual tradition. As the panorama of the *Indes*, they are depictions of the composition of societies through the encounter with difference and, in this, can be said to convey an inherently problematic, even conflictual dynamic. In early modern colonial societies, they testify to the importance of religion in constituting identity, as well as of other constructions of diversity which reflect socio-economic status as well as birth and *race*.

These texts are also composed of the residue of testimonies gathered by individuals who occupied transient positions within the societies of the *Indes*. In their edited form, they often testify to the re-use of *topoi* of the printed corpus. Nonetheless, the reader is often faced with the testimony of travellers who skirted the edges of cultures and of languages, and is led to ask in what it might reflect the echoes of the lost oral traditions of early colonies. The notoriously unreliable traveller-narrator, recounting unlikely anecdotes on the margins of experience, reflects a curious mix of European and colonial preoccupations.

French travellers, as has been seen, often themselves occupied a place on the margins of colonial societies. One is led to question how the encounter with *métissage* reflects or even interrogates their own often uneasy existence, and the extent to which their affirmations of rigid difference constitute assurances of belonging, faced with the often threatening diversity of the *Indes*. In addition, in these texts generated from the encounter, and often the conflict, between European, African and Asian peoples, the problematic place of *métissage* is hinted at. The phenomenon, ever on the margins of developing socio-economic, racial and even religious systems, occupies uneasy territory in the margins of this corpus. Within, perhaps, can be glimpsed the reflection of the confrontations, fears and desires of the developing colonies.

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