French Anti-colonial Engagement during the Algerian War of Independence in Christian Buono's *l'Olivier De Makouda*: Between Political Solidarity and Civilizing Mission

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Abstract Colonial Algeria is a paradigmatic example of the exchange of civilizations between Europe and North Africa. Within an atmosphere marked by military violence and forced acculturation imposed by the French colonizer on the colonized Algerian people, a new culture came into being to transform the previously existing cultural aspect of Algeria. Under the complexity of the cultural shifts and power imbalance of the time, Christian Buono, the European communist, with his family, chose the Algerian side and would become an Algerian citizen after independence. His narrative *L'olivier de Makouda* [The Olive Tree of Makouda] published in 1991 reveals the impact of the prolonged contact between the European and North African civilizations on both Algerian and French citizens. Drawing on postcolonial theory-particularly Frantz Fanon's analyses of colonization and decolonization, Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and ambivalence, and Edward Said's critique of Orientalism—together with Ngugi wa Thiong'o's notion of "decolonizing the mind" and Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron's theory of symbolic violence, this article adopts a qualitative, interpretive reading of the book. It examines how cultural, ideological, and political exchanges between the French and Algerian peoples during the Algerian War of Independence are represented and structured within a colonial framework. The analysis reveals the moral and cultural underpinnings of colonialism, emphasizing a Franco-Algerian encounter shaped by coercion, domination and unequal power relations. Elements of "l'oeuvre civilisatrice" are also revealed in this historical document within its anti-colonial discourse, maintaining the European cultural hegemony and emphasizing the need of political and educational enlightenment for Algerians to liberate their minds before their land.

Keywords Algeria; French colonization; Anti-colonialism; interculturality; The

civilizing mission.

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Introduction

French colonialism in Algeria (1830-1962) and the Algerian war of independence (1954-1962) are frequently studied from the angle of the confrontation between a colonial power and a people struggling for its liberation. Yet, this binary interpretation often neglects the multiple forms of engagement that traversed this period, notably those of the French anti-colonialists who, in rupture with the dominant ideology of their country, have chosen to support the Algerian cause. Their action, far from being limited to a simple political or humanitarian motion, can be perceived as a factual meeting of civilizations, a space of exchange between Europe and North Africa where ethical convictions, cultural heritages and common hopes were converged.

In his historical work *L'Olivier de Makouda* (Un Algérien de souche européenne dans la guerre d'Algérie) [Makouda Olive Tree (An Algerian of European Descent in the Algerian War)], originally published in 1991, Christian Buono, himself a witness to and actor of this period, sensitively restores this singular experience of transnational solidarity. Through his narrative, he highlights not only the courageous commitments of certain French people, but also the profoundly human and intercultural dimension of this struggle, where colonial antagonism sometimes gives way to fraternity and mutual recognition. This hybrid document that blends personal memory, historical testimony and political engagement can be read as a human and intercultural meeting.

Seldom studied in mainstream literary criticism, the book has however aroused the interest of certain researchers in cultural and historical studies, who see it as a rare attempt to think of French anti-colonial engagement and political consciousness. In his preface to the book, Gilles Perrault focuses on the ethical and political courage of Buono's engagement against a public opinion which was mostly belligerent. The author, according to him, has chosen to "ramer à contre-courant" [row against the current], joining the ranks of those who resisted colonialism (Perrault). As for Henry Alleg, he brings a more intimate and humanist portrait of

Buono in his foreword to *L'Olivier de Makouda*, evoking their prison cohabitation in cell 72 at Barberousse, Algiers, 1957. His testimony reinforces the idea that Buono is part of those rare Europeans who, in the context of colonial injustice, have courageously chosen to side with Algerians in their struggle for dignity. He maintains that the author does not seek to construct a heroic story but to transmit his memory of daily resistance (Alleg). Perrault and Alleg's criticism of the book has underlined its historical importance, emphasizing the personal engagement of Buono as an anonymous militant and the role of the Algerian Communist Party in the liberation of Algeria.

Recent work on European communist militants in the Algerian War and intercultural contact zones in colonial Algeria provide an essential framework for situating Buono's *L'Olivier de Makouda*. Historians such as Sylvie Thénault argue that the case of Maurice Audin, a French mathematician and member of the Algerian Communist Party who disappeared under torture in 1957, has become a "site of contested memory and historical inquiry" that reveals broader interactions between French communists and nationalist movements during the conflict (Thénault 158-159). Building on this, Raphaëlle Branche situates militant engagement and acts of denunciation within the violence saturated social and political environments of colonial war, emphasizing that denunciations of torture and repression shaped networks of solidarity and dissent across European and Algerian actors (Branche 11-12).

Complementary work on Algerian nationalism and colonial culture, particularly James McDougall's *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (2006), draws attention to the heterogeneous and often asymmetrical nature of intercultural encounters under French rule (McDougall 19). Other historians, such as Jennifer E. Sessions, in *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (2011), demonstrate the depth and catastrophic longevity of the civilizing-mission ideology that continued to "redefine post revolutionary French identity and sovereignty" (Sessions 11). Session's work shows how colonial ideology structured not only domination but also many later attempts at solidarity.

Issue and Working Hypothesis

Positioned within the above historiographical and critical background, the present article extends these debates by showing how Buono's novel embodies an ambivalent "third space" in which anti-colonial solidarity coexists with subtle residues of the colonial myth of civilization. A post-colonial reading of this document draws attention to the profound cultural and ideological dialogue between the French anti-colonialists and the Algerians during the war. However,

these exchanges remain tinged with the survival of the colonial civilizing mission, revealing the ambiguities of a solidarity marked by asymmetry. Although Buono firmly denounces colonialism, his narrative is sometimes marked by a paternalistic or idealized vision of the Algerian people, inherited from the assimilative colonial project. Thus, the work falls within a grey area, between rupture and colonial continuity, and this is precisely what suggests a post-colonial reading attentive to the unsaid, to the asymmetries and to the discursive survivals of power.

To clarify this approach, the article tackles two fundamental research questions: How does Buono's narrative renovate or inadvertently perpetuate structures of the colonial civilizing mission even as it positions itself as anti-colonial? What does this ambivalence reveal about the broader dynamics of French anti-colonial engagement during the Algerian war? Taking in hand these two questions offers a new reading of *L'Olivier de Makouda* that emphasizes the persistence of colonial epistemologies within metropolitan anti-colonial writing, and that theorizes Buono's position as part of a complex, unbalanced form of intercultural solidarity.

The analysis adopts a qualitative interpretive method, combining textual analysis with perceptions drawn from postcolonial theory. It is based on a close reading of Buono's book, with particular attention to narrative voice, lexical choices, representations of violence, and the expression of cultural hierarchies. The book is examined as a site where colonial power relations are discursively constructed and contested. It is, thus, approached as a hybrid text, functioning simultaneously as historical testimony and as a literary and cultural account shaped by story lined strategies and retrospective framing. While the narrator's voice draws heavily on autobiographical experience, this study allows for narrative construction and intercession, admitting that memory, perspective, and political context inform the representation of colonial experience. This methodological stance makes it possible to analyze the document not only as a record of colonial violence but also as a discursive intervention in the cultural and symbolic dimensions of colonial domination.

Theoretical Grounds

Post-colonial theorists, such as Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha and Edward Said, though distinct in focus, collectively construct a powerful framework for understanding postcolonial interculturality as a site of conflict, negotiation and transformation. They reveal how cultural relations between the colonized and the colonizer are often characterized by unequal power dynamics. Fanon emphasizes the psychological violence and identity rupture caused by colonization, arguing that true

liberation and thus genuine interculturality requires a violent rupture from colonial domination. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), he asserts that "the colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards." (Fanon 18). In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), he argues that "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon" (Fanon 35). In the same context, Said exposes how colonial power is maintained through cultural representations, particularly through Orientalism, which reduces the colonized to stereotypes and blocks authentic dialogue. In *Orientalism* (1978), he claims that "orientalism is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice" (Said 6) and in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), he maintains that "the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism" (Said 119).

On the other hand, Bhabha shifts the focus to the ambiguous and hybrid spaces created by colonial encounters, where identities are negotiated and authority destabilized through mimicry, ambivalence and the emergence of a third space. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), he contends that the third space "is the interstices -the overlap and displacement of domains of difference- that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated." (Bhabha 2). All together, the above mentioned theorists challenged the logic of the civilizing mission considering it as a violent imposition by Fanon, as a cultural construct by Said, and as a contradiction by Bhabha.

The analysis also draws on Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron's theory of schooling as a mechanism of social reproduction and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's critique of colonial education as a tool of cultural domination. These theorists of colonial education are mobilized here because the school functions as a central instrument of "the civilizing mission" in Buono's narrative, where the first protagonist-narrator is himself a French teacher in an Algerian school during the war of independence. In *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1977), Bourdieu and Passeron's theory of schooling and "symbolic violence" helps to read the colonial school as a key apparatus of the French "civilizing mission" in Algeria. As Bourdieu notes,

> The major thrust of the imposition of the dominant culture as legitimate culture and, by the same token, of the illegitimacy of the cultures of the dominated groups or classes, comes from exclusion, which perhaps has the most symbolic force when it assumes the guise of self-exclusion. (Bourdieu and Passeron 42-43)

Ngugi, in *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), explains how colonial education and its language policies alienate learners from their culture and serve as instruments of control. He observes that colonial schooling "annihilated a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. " (Ngugi 3). This illuminates how Buono, in *L'Olivier de Makouda*, reveals the cultural and psychological violence in colonial schools.

Colonial Violence and Its Effect on Algerian People in Buono's *L'olivier de Makouda*

In *L'Olivier de Makouda*, Christian Buono delivers a rare and poignant account of the Algerian war of independence, written with the courage of those who refused to remain silent in the face of injustice. This story is part of a tradition of lucid and moral resistance, countering false heroism. Far from any victim-centered stance, Buono gives voice to a singular man mobilized by the present but inhabited by the living memory of those, like Maurice Audin, Fernand Iveton and Thomas Maillot, who paid with their lives for their loyalty to justice. Far from being a simple return to a bygone past, *L'Olivier de Makouda* questions our ability to choose the side of justice in troubled times, and reminds us that the Algerian War, with its trail of repression and torture, was also a moment of ethical and political choice. Through Buono's eyes, words of commitment, doubt and also dignity emerge, making this book much more than a testimony: an act of active remembrance, nourished by hardship, loyalty and profound humanism.

Brother-in-law of Maurice Audin who died under torture, Chritian Buono, an anonymous grassroots activist and a militant in the Algerian Communist Party (A.C.P.) from the outbreak of the conflict for independence, chose the Algerian side with his family. In his narrative, he speaks about this tragic and troubled period, focusing on its effects on the Algerian people and those who stand against French colonialism, both at the economic, political, psychological and cultural levels. Born in 1923, Buono spent his entire life in Algeria until his arrival in France in 1966. As a teacher, both in the city and the countryside, he is a privileged witness of the life of Algerian and French people of modest conditions. Married to Maurice Audin's sister in 1947, he followed the path of this young academic who disappeared in the torture chambers in 1957. Arrested for harboring senior officials of The A.C.P., he spent two years in prison (1957-1959) and two years in hiding (1960-1962). He later participated in the work of building new Algeria (1962-1966). His historical book *L'Olivier de Makouda* (Makouda's Olive Tree) is a good witness of colonial

violence, cultural and psychological repression under colonialism, but also of the convergence between European and North African civilizations.

Psychological and Symbolic Violence

In *L'Olivier de Makouda*, Buono exposes with a dramatic intensity the brutality of colonial violence exercised over the Algerian people, notably through the village of Makouda, a microcosm of national suffering, and the city of Algiers with its prisons. The author depicts systemic violence—both physical and symbolic—that crushes bodies, shatters spirits, and seeks to erase memory. In Makouda, where he works as a teacher, he evokes colonial violence through various school scenes, subtly revealing the oppression, fear, and absurdity imposed on both pupils and teachers.

School is, thus, used by the colonizer as an instrument of domination both at the cultural and military levels. In chapter two entitled "Un inspecteur chez les petits Gaulois" [an inspector among the little Gauls], the inspector is depicted as an authoritarian and sarcastic man who handles the journal "L'école et la nation" [The School and the Nation]. This symbolizes the colonial doctrine reminding teachers that the school's purpose is to instruct Algerian children that their country belongs to the French nation. While interrogating Buono, the inspector asks him whether his mission is pedagogy or politics: "Pédagogie ou politique?" (3) [pedagogy or politics?] to remind him that anti-colonial politics is forbidden in the Algerian school. Here, the inspector uses a pedagogical tool as a mean of ideological control and a vector of colonial propaganda. The scene underlines the role of school in the production of a "good colonized" and the erasure of local identities. This reinforces Fanon's view that colonization is violent at the physical, psychological and cultural levels, and that "the educational system" of the colonizer implants in "the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and inhibition which lightens the task of policing considerably." (Fanon 38).

Buono notices that the pupils are terrified by the inspector's behavior: "Terrifiés, les élèves demeuraient immobile et silencieux." (3) [Terrified, the pupils remained motionless and silent]. This observation evokes the psychological effect of colonial presence on the children, manifested through fear, astonishment and loss of bearings due to the colonial authority which entered the classroom not as a guide, but as an intimidating force. Being accustomed with repression and surveillance, they are confused and unable to make a difference between a teacher and security agent:

Inspecteur de police? [Police inspector?]
Non, Inspecteur des écoles. Il contrôle mon travail

[No, school inspector, he controls my work].
Il a rien contrôlé. Il a seulement fouillé par tout. Qu'est ce que c'est que ça?
[He didn't control anything. He has just searched everywhere. What is this?].
Il cherchait peut-être des mitraillettes, dit Hocine en éclatant de rire.
[May be he was looking for machine guns, said Hocine bursting out laughing]. (3)

This dialogue between the pupils and their teacher exposes a colonial school system that operates as an instrument of social control rather than a means of emancipation. Hocine's laughing here can be seen as both a childhood irony and a defense mechanism against this absurd reality which puts people everywhere under military control to the point that it becomes anchored even in children.

Another form of psychological violence exercised over Algerians is the myth of the "Petits Gaulois" [Little Gauls], inscribed in the chapter's title, reminding them that their ancestors are the Gauls. This negation of the historical and cultural identity of the colonized is a fundamental violence of French Colonialism. Colonial education imposes a fictitious historical lineage disconnected from Algerian reality, with the aim of shaping deterritorialized and obedient French people. This can be read through Fanon's (1952) view that the colonized subject is denied a stable, authentic identity and he is contingent upon the white man's perception: "A black schoolboy… in his lessons is forever talking about 'our ancestors, the Gauls,' identifies himself with the explorers, the bringer of civilization, the Whiteman who carries truth to savages -an all-white truth" (Fanon 147).

The brutality of French colonialism, as it is portrayed by Buono, is first experienced at school, through inspectors as well as through pedagogical and historical discourse, indicating that colonial violence is not limited to physical coercion but extends to historical, psychological, and cultural forms. In this sense, the colonial school operates as a mechanism of what Bourdieu and Passeron term "symbolic violence", namely the imposition of a dominant cultural arbitrary that is misrecognized as legitimate and universal (Bourdieu and Passeron 5-7). By presenting the history, language, and values of the colonizer as neutral knowledge, schooling contributes to the discrediting and erasure of the colonized subject's cultural past. This idea echoes Fanon's claim that "Colonialism […] turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it" (Fanon 210), highlighting how education functions as a central instrument of epistemic domination.

Structural and Cultural Violence

Buono maintains his denunciation of colonial violence throughout his text which is

full of tension between the colonized and the colonizer, conveyed through language, silence and power games at school. In chapter three entitled "L'Olivier de Makouda" The Olive Tree of Makouda, the olive tree serves as a symbol of repression and injustice, exploited as a school resource out of necessity. Buono declares that when the moment of the picking comes, all the classes are mobilized for a collective harvest (6). This harvest, which is initially a pedagogical activity, turns into an economic gain, permitting the pupils to get something fundamental for their school. It becomes clear that the school suffers from a lack of funding and the complete disengagement of the colonial administration, leaving the pupils responsible for meeting their own basic needs. This illustrates the colonial institution's neglect and deprivation imposed on the indigenous population. The olive tree, which is the symbol of peace and wisdom, becomes here a mean of economic survival in a school abandoned by colonial authorities. This situation illustrates a form of structural violence making a tree feeds the needs that the administration refuses to meet.

Structural violence is, in fact, manifested in the institutions, the laws and the different practices that reproduce injustice, generally without recourse to direct force. In Buono's text, the school, which is meant to be neutral and educative, becomes a space of military surveillance destructing the mutual coolness between the teachers and the pupils. Several passages from the book underline the militarization of this civil space, placing everyone under armed surveillance. In Makouda particularly, the school's director is put under close watch because of his socialist and anti-colonial tendencies. Buono sates, "l'armée veillait sur lui, filtrant impitoyablement nos moindres contacts et chassant brutalement les écoliers assez naïfs pour proposer aux gendarmes les légumes 'communistes' du jardin scholaire" (9) [The army watched over him, mercilessly filtering our slightest contacts and brutally chasing away schoolchildren naïve enough to offer the police the "communist" vegetables from the school garden]. He adds that "certains enseignants seraient détruits par les insurgés. Ainsi dispaitraient les seuls témoins d'un effort culturel…" (9). [Some teachers would be destroyed by the insurgents. Thus, the only witnesses of a cultural effort would disappear]. The teachers are, then, put between two fires, being repressed by the French army as suspects and menaced by the nationalists for their imposed role by the colonial power.

Within institutional violence, entrenched a symbolic cultural violence legitimating the domination and dehumanization of the colonized. Cultural disparagement is very open when a colonial teacher expresses an unashamed racism, denying any capacity for Algerian children to appropriate a culture. He considers them as "des sauvages qui n'ont rien à foutre de la culture française" (8) [savages who do

not give a damn about French culture]. This echoes Said's (1978) view that Western discourse constructs the East as its savage opposite, arguing that "the Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (Said 40). This overt cultural racism is reinforced by a fierce violence against Makouda's people who are against French presence on their territory: "ça leur apprendra à etre anti-Français" (9) [that will teach them to be anti-French], explains the inspector, who leaves them without a teacher for months.

The manner in which the colonizer imposes a unilateral vision of "French culture," while rejecting indigenous culture as "savage" and "inferior," exemplifies the mechanisms of colonial cultural hegemony. Colonial education systematically devalues Algerian children and orients them toward assimilation, enacting what Ngũgĩ identifies as the most enduring form of domination: control over consciousness through culture and language. As Ngũgĩ argues, colonial power seeks to make the colonized perceive their past as "one wasteland of non-achievement" (N'gugi 16), a process clearly visible in the treatment of Algerian pupils as passive "objects" of the educational system rather than as historical subjects. This logic corresponds closely to Bourdieu and Passeron's notion of symbolic violence, whereby domination is exercised through pedagogical authority that is misrecognized as legitimate and neutral (Bourdieu and Passeron 4).

Resistance is consequently stigmatized and perceived as a form of infection to be eradicated, revealing a racist structure that denies the colonized both identity and dignity. This educational violence is reinforced by military practices that function not only as instruments of repression but also as tools of psychological and cultural intimidation. The dehumanizing use of terms such as "fellagas" [outlaws] illustrates how language itself becomes a weapon, echoing Fanon's analysis of cultural alienation, in which the colonized subject is fixed within a discourse that negates their humanity (Fanon 18). *L'Olivier de Makouda*, thus, exposes violence at interconnected levels—physical, institutional, and cultural—demonstrating how colonial domination operates simultaneously on bodies, minds, and symbolic structures.

Decolonization as a Violent Process

Within the oppression of the colonizer, Algerians keep on living according to their customs and traditions, and many French anti-colonialists oppose the imposition of colonial authority through invisible but persistent acts of resistance. This means that violence is not without opposition. Acts of rebellion, although discreet, reflect a continual struggle against a domination that dehumanizes the Other. The author mentions clearly "les fellaghas", a pejorative term used by the colonial authorities

to designate the National Liberation Front (N.L.F.) fighters. This demonstrates that the context of the story is set in the middle of the national liberation war (1954-1962), when Algerians were fighting for their independence against the French colonial presence. The allusion to the infiltration of the school and the subversive plan of international communism reflects the paranoia of the French colonial system in the face of an Algerian that it can no longer control. This reveals the fear of the political awakening of the colonized.

Several characters, including Buono himself, the pupils, the villagers and some French anti-colonialists, refuse colonial order. Buono, the teacher and the narrator of the book, expresses in several passages his disagreement with colonial authorities. He, for instance, expresses his revolutionist discourse in the following sentence: "Révolté, je courus vers le garage occupé par un infirmier militaire… ou les articles de sport étaient groupés … mais renonçai strictement à cette vaine demarche" (19) [Revolted, I ran towards the garage occupied by a military nurse…where the sporting goods were grouped together…but strictly abandoned this futile approach]. On their part, the pupils, through their ironic and sarcastic behavior toward the French settlers, refuse assimilation. Buono maintains, "Enervé, les enfants s'agitaient. Les visages durcis, ils menaçaient naïvement de leurs petits poings un ennemi lointain. Un léger grondement courut le long des murs centenaires de la classe" (5) [The children were agitated, their faces hardened, and they naively shook their little fists at a distant enemy. A low growl ran along the century-old walls of the classroom].

Throughout *L'Oliver de Makouda*, Buono expresses clearly his support to the Algerian cause. He recognizes the coming sufferings but affirms his moral and political solidarity with the oppressed. It is, for him, a matter of taking a position against colonial injustice in favor of the combat for liberty. He asserts, "Pauvre Algérie, que de tourments tu vas subir encore pour ta liberté!... Et nous? Ce sera dur, mais notre place est du coté des opprimés" (19) [Poor Algeria, how much more torment you will endure for your freedom!... And us? It will be hard, but our place is on the side of the oppressed]. Revolution is also intellectual and political, according to Buono. This is mainly expressed by the students whose slogans are quite but effective: "Juste le temps pour que les murs des couloirs soient barbouliés des slogans indépendantistes" (18) [Just enough time for the walls of the corridors to be daubed with pre-independence slogans]. The author evokes also Maurice Audin, who is a real and emblematic figure of the Algerian cause dead under torture due to his engagement. Audin adds a humanistic dimension to the revolution.

In the ensuing chapters of the book, the writer focuses on the solidarity between the members of the Communist Party under the leadership of some

Europeans, including Buono himself, and the Algerian revolutionists from 1956 to 1962. He calls to mind the complexity of their struggle, characterized by imprisonment, torture and assassination. During his years of imprisonment in "Barberous" [Barbarossa] and "La Maison Carrée" [The Square House], the French author recognizes daily signs of brotherhood that illustrate the revolution of the mind. He refers to Serge, a co-prisoner who reads for him. He also mentions Lordi, a Marxist camp, which becomes a space of learning and intellectual exchanges. In the domineering places, the revolutionists reinvent an educative revolution: Courses in philosophy, science and economy are offered by renowned professors in an effort to reconstruct the mind despite oppression. In this sense, Fanon (1994) argues that the colonized intellectual must realize that the fight for national existence is the fight against colonialism in all its forms, including the cultural and intellectual plane:

> The national Algerian culture is taking on form and content as the battles are being fought out, in prisons, under the guillotine, and in every French outpost which is captured or destroyed. We must not be content with delving into the past of the people in order to find coherent elements which will counterpart colonialism's attempts to falsify and harm. (Fanon 233)

Returning to the school, the author is welcomed as a hero. The children call him "Moudjahed" [freedom fighter] and applaud his presence (53). The link between the French teacher and his Algerian pupils becomes a symbol of collective revolution, and education serves as a force of dignity. Amar, one of his learners, reminds him that he is at home there among them: "Tu es chez toi ici" (54) [You are at home here]. These individual and collective transformations incarnate a profound cultural and intellectual resistance face to colonial oppression. Within this solidarity, a third space of interculturality, hybridity and ambivalence comes into being.

Interculturality, Hybridity and Ambivalence in *L'Olivier de Makouda*:

Interculturality designates interaction between two distinct cultures or more, notably through human relations, linguistic exchanges and education. *L'Olivier de Makouda*, a story of fellowship, education and political engagement under colonialism, is charged by elements of interculturality. In chapter three entitled "L'Olivier de Makouda", the contact between the Algerian and French cultures is symbolized by the olive tree which is employed as a bridge between colonial education and the agricultural traditions of the region. Buono refers to Sully, a French man, who said that "la figue et l'olive sont les deux mamelles de la Kabylie"

(6) [the fig and the olive are the two breasts of Kabylia]. The school is presented as a space of intercultural shift controlled by French authorities but reappropriated by the Kabyle pupils, who seem attentive to all the details concerning the harvest, and the marketing of olive fruit and olive oil. The French author mentions also some local words like "Kintal" [=one hundred kilogram], "fissa" [quickly], "benessiassa" [slowly] that the pupils use while negotiating the marketing of their collect. This indicates that the French teacher who is set there to teach the pupils the French language is put in direct contact with the local culture, taking sometimes the position of the learner from his pupils. This type of "interculturality" can be read through Mary Louise Pratt's (1992) notion of "contact zone", designating spaces where cultures enter in contact in asymmetric but fertile manner.

The subsequent chapters of the book are full of examples of cultural exchange resulted mainly from the constant contact between Algerian warriors and their French allies, ending with hybrid cultures and identities. In this context, Homi Bhabha (1994) argues that

> the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. It is the 'in-between' space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture." (Bhabha 38)

This hybridity is exemplified in Chapter Seventeen of *L'Olivier de Makouda*, entitled "Bagra Spaniouli" (A Spanish Cow), where the French writer notes, "Je parlais l'arabe "Kimal Bagra Spaniouli (comme une vache espagnole)" (47) [I speak Arabic like a Spanish cow]. This sentence illustrates a funny and self-ironic linguistic hybridity, meaning that the French teacher living in Algeria speaks a clumsy Arabic, which is a mixture between the local dialect and the French language.

Conversely, the Algerians do their best to communicate with the French language, which is the only tool for them to learn about the ideological and political strategies that will get them out of their misery and lead them to liberty. At school, the pupils interact fluently with their French teacher and are eager to study seriously: " Les élèves ne posaient jamais le moindre problème de discipline et travaillent avec le plus grand sérieux" […] habitués à parler sans aucune crainte" (1-4) [the pupils never posed the slightest problem of discipline and worked with the greatest seriousness […] accustomed to speaking without fear]. Leading his communist

combat against the French colonizer, the author makes reference to some Algerian names, like Bachir, Sadek and Larbi, good partisans of the Algerian Communist Party, speaking and writing correctly the French language. These men are described as intelligent and brave intellectual participants in the war. He observes, "J'aimais tous ces copains engagés depuis le début de cette guerre dans une lutte impitoyable, mais Sadek était pour moi différent. Chaque fois, je trouvais auprès de cette force de la nature, venue des rudes montagnes kabyles, un réconfort et un apaisement" (67). [I loved all those friends who had been engaged in a merciless struggle since the beginning of this war, but Sadek was different for me. Each time, I found comfort and relief in this force of nature, who came from the harsh Kabyle mountains].

This miscegenation reflects a colonial linguistic fragmentation, where the language of the colonizer becomes the dominating language and a tool of resistance and survival. According to Bhabha (1994), it is a form of soft resistance; he perceives that "hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal" (Bhabha 112). Yet, "hybridity" reproduces "ambivalence", a concept central to Bhabha and Fanon, referring to a double attitude towards the colonizer and reflecting both admiration and hatred, imitation and rejection. For Fanon, this ambivalence is psychologically destructive for the colonized who seeks to resemble the colonizer while hating him. For Bhabha, it is a strategy of subversion and dislocation of colonial discourse, which "displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination" (Bhabha 112).

The Civilizing Mission of the Colonizer in *L'Olivier de Makouda*: Representation and Power

Beyond the cultural interaction between certain anti-colonial French figures and Algerian people in *L'olivier de Makouda*, the façade of the civilizing mission with its paternalistic discourse is uncloaked. In fact, the French colonial project of civilization in Algeria had the role of educating the colonized to dominate it historically and morally through the imposition of the French language at school, its culture and its institutions. This mission is based on implicit or explicit racial hierarchy, postulating the superiority of the western civilization. The profession of the author and his partisan activities are key indicators of this operation. He is there to awaken the political, ideological and intellectual consciousness of some Algerians by opening their minds to the occidental civilization. This, in his view, is the only way that can lead to their independence. In fact, the whole book focuses on the role of the Communist Party in the independence of Algeria, referring to important

European Marxist figures and nations. The French language is the only tool between their hands to reach this political maturity, in his view. This reinforces Said's (1978) idea that the French and British saw the Orient as something to be directed, revised, controlled and brought into light with Western norms of order and rationality. In fact, the Westerners, in Said's view, consider the eastern populations as "a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves" (Said 35).

In Chapter Nine, entitled "Un peuple français pour l'éternité" (A French people for eterniy), Buono evokes explicitly the colonial civilizing mission, referring to the subject of the Europeans of Algeria of whom "les plus humbles même clamaient bien haut la nécessité de 'poursuivre l'Œuvre Civilisatrice' dans ce pays que 'les Arabes -livrés à eux-mêmes laisseraient redevenir un désert…'" (20) [even the most humble loudly proclaimed the necessity of 'continuing the Civilizing Work' in this country that the Arabs -left to their own devices- would let become a desert again…'"]. The expression "Oeuvre Civilisatrice", put between inverted commas in this quotation, is an ironic or distanced citation, through which the French narrator and teacher wants to detach himself from this colonial justification. The idea that the Arabs would let this country become a desert again reflects a paternalistic and racist vision, denying all capacity of autonomy for Algerians. We find here a classical rhetoric that the colonized is seen as immature and incapable of ruling himself by himself, and the White Man , paradoxically by the very fact of his maturity, was there to help the child grow into maturity; the oriental was the child, the European the adult. "Being a White Man, in short, was a very concrete manner of being-in-the -world, a way of taking hold of reality, language and thought" (Said 227).

Despite his being against the concept of the civilizing mission, Buono, in several passages, presents himself as a guide for the Algerians in their revolution. In chapter twenty two, for instance, he is requested to help The Algerian Communist Party in everything related to text and lettering: "Tu es rodé pour les addresses à rédiger" (63) [You are familiar with writing addresses]. "Il faut que tu écrives quelque chose là-dessus" (64) [You need to write something about this]. In these passages, Buono works as a bridge between the Algerian militants and the French supports, which is essential to legitimate the revolution at the international level. He, all along the book, teaches, protects, instructs, orients and structures; he is a secret but central guide who makes the struggle effective. He is, then, not only a precious help but a necessary guide without whom the Algerian youth, being novice, would be more vulnerable.

Conclusion

The analysis of Christian Buono's *L'Olivier de Makouda* reveals that it is a hybrid story combining personal memory, historical testimony and political engagement. It is among the rare historical documents that expose the French anti-colonial engagement as both a political support for the colonized Algeria and a form of human and intercultural meeting. Thus, Buono's book can be situated in the memorial and militant tradition that includes the works tackling the historical, cultural and identity tensions during colonial Algeria. Through a narration imbued with realism and humanism, Buono sketches the portrait of an atypical French settler, torn between his role as a European on Algerian soil and his sincere attachment to the local population. The characters, like the author, oscillate between two worlds: one is colonial and domineering and the other is Algerian in resistance. As such, ambivalence is also at the heart of the narrative, reflecting Buono as both a supporter for the Algerian cause and as an enlightening guide and paternalistic figure who inherited some aspects of the colonial system.

The book's ambivalent position is manifested mainly in relation to colonial discourse. While it clearly deplores French domination in Algeria and looks for a space of intercultural cohesion, it nonetheless remains characterized by understated residues of the civilizing mission that inform the narrator's gaze and his understanding of Algerian society. The study demonstrates that the novel both disrupts and inadvertently extends colonial structures of tutelage, revealing the extent to which metropolitan anti-colonial engagement could still be framed by inherited hierarchies and paternalistic assumptions. By bringing these tensions to light, the article offers a new contribution to the study of French anti-colonial actors, illustrating that solidarity, despite its ethical aspirations, often unfolded within an asymmetrical "third space" marked by negotiation, ambivalence, and the persistence of unequal power relations.

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