

Article

# Afropolitan Sexual and Gender Identities in Colonial Senegal

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**Abstract:** Drawing from Achille Mbembe's theorization of Afropolitanism as an opportunity for modern Africans "to experience several worlds" and develop flux, hybrid, and constantly mobile identities ("Afropolitanism" 29), this essay attempts to make an intervention into the ways in which this phenomenon appeared in colonial Senegalese culture. A neglected site of Afropolitanism was the colonial metropolis of Dakar which reflected subversive homosexual or transgender identities during the 1940s and 50s. Focusing on key writings such as Armand Corre's book, *L'ethnographie criminelle d'après les observations et les statistiques judiciaires recueillies dans les colonies françaises* [criminal ethnography based on judiciary observations and statistics gathered from French colonies] (1894) and Michael Davidson's travelogue, "Dakar" (1970), this essay wants to uncover a part of the silenced and neglected history of sexual and gender variances in colonial Senegalese culture. In these texts, one finds salient examples of Afropolitanism which were deployed as tools of resistance against homophobia and transphobia and as means of affirming erotic, sensual, and transgressive identities. In the end, colonial Senegalese culture transcended gender and sexual binaries in order to provide space for recognizing and examining Afropolitan sensibilities that have thus far been neglected in African studies scholarship.

**Keywords:** afropolitanism; cosmopolitanism; colonial Senegal; homosexuality; transgenderism

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, Afropolitanism has become an increasingly popular theory in black cultural studies, inspiring new lenses in the study of African identities. The theory is prominent in the study of subversive formations of personal and collective African identities which disrupt binaries between Western and African traditions as well as those between local and global cultures. For instance, Rebecca Fasselt interprets *Bom Boy*, the debut novel of the South African-based, Barbados-born, and Nigerian-descended and reared writer Yewande Omotoso, as a book that challenges Mbembe's perception of South Africa as a major site of "Afropolitan urban spaces," given the "vexed relationships between South Africa and Africa, its long-standing orientation toward non-African (Western) elsewhere and its disconnection from the continent" (Fasselt 2015, p. 120). However, while Afropolitanism has been used to examine "urban spaces" and complex identities in specific nations such as South Africa and Nigeria, this theory has not been sufficiently utilized to study Senegalese cultures. Yet, like many other African nations, Senegal is rife with Afropolitanism that can be inventoried from precolonial to contemporary times. Without examining this large history, this essay simply aims to explore a small part of it, namely, the Afropolitan sexual and gender identities that evolved in colonial Senegal during the late nineteenth century and, later, in 1949, when Michael Davidson, a British traveler, visited its town of Dakar. Later published in 1970 as "Dakar," this travelogue is Afropolitan because it reveals the existence, in colonial Senegal, of a dissident, subversive, and creative black Senegalese transgender and homosexual culture that thrived on the fringes of the country's capital city while interacting with a European clientele that was exploitative and denigrating toward people with non-normative gender

and sexual identities. By examining the above dynamics, the essay will reveal the importance of Western travel writings in the reconstitution of the silenced history of transgender and homosexual individuals in Senegal. The erasure and denial of this history in Senegal is part of a larger context in which LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, or Intersex) identified people in Africa are often deprived of basic human rights and are usual victims of customary violence which has rendered them strangers in their own land. By exploring Armand Corre's book, *L'ethnographie criminelle d'après les observations et les statistiques judiciaires recueillies dans les colonies françaises* [criminal ethnography based on judiciary observations and statistics gathered from French colonies] (1894) and Michael Davidson's travelogue, "Dakar" (1970), this essay aims to reveal the Afropolitanism that marginalized segments of Senegalese populations with variant gender and sexual identities embodied by affirming their status of creative, mobile, and open-minded Africans who were not limited by the colonial boundaries of race, culture, religion, nationality, caste, and class.

## 2. Western Concepts in African Contexts

Studying transgenderism and homosexuality in African contexts is challenging because it may entail using concepts which are primarily Western since they may derive from the history of LGBTQI identified people against hetero-normative oppression in the West. The issue is not the absence in Africa of similar non-hetero-normative identities and histories, but the lack of sufficient research on the traditional African languages that used to describe them. Clearly, in Africa, terms like "transgender," "homosexual," and "gay" should not be ascribed the same meanings that they have in the West. Yet, while research on how these words were and are translated in various African languages and cultures progresses, it is going to be necessary for African scholars to use these Western terms' African equivalents in order to understand specific contexts, identities, and histories in Africa. It is possible to use such equivalents while recognizing the unique positions from which African scholars tend to study variant gender and sexual identities. The particular vantage points and locations of African scholars are clear in Deborah Amory (1997) following statement: "[W]hile western scholars work to reclaim part traditions of 'homosexuality,' African activists and scholars (particularly in the diaspora) are more concerned with theorizing post-colonial lesbian and gay identities. For these scholars and activists, the terms 'lesbian' and 'gay' are appropriated from their western contexts and applied to African lives and politics" (Amory 1997, p. 8). This appropriation and domestication of Western terms in African LGBTQI scholarship can help to uncover a range of inclusive African gender and sexual identities and concepts. In this endeavor, Marc Epprecht writes in his book, *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa* (2013):

*Hungochani* means "homosexuality" in chiShona, the main indigenous language of Zimbabwe. The same term is spelled *ubunkotshani* or *iNkotshani* ("a homosexual") in siNdibele, the second indigenous language. Both words appear to have been coined in the mid-1990s by gay right activists through the simple addition of the prefix *hu-* and *ubu-/i-* to an older, highly derogatory term. The prefix points to a state of being or an intrinsic nature, rather than an opportunistic life-style choice. It thus opens the door to be inclusive of lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered persons as well as self-identified gays or other men who have sex with men. (Epprecht 2013, p. 3)

Similar arguments can be made in the Senegalese context where the term "*gôr djiguène*" (meaning "man-woman" in the Wolof language) is also inclusive since it can designate a "homosexual" or a "transgendered" person as well as people with other gender and sexual identities. There is increasing evidence that the term "homosexual" is a Western concept that is unable to capture all the varieties of sexual and gender identities that existed in traditional Senegalese society. In this vein, Broqua (2017) writes: "At the time when the *góor-jigéen* was not defined by his sexuality but by his (inversion of) gender, the existence of homosexuality itself was not known to most people. It was when it became so that the sexuality of the *góor-jigéen* was gradually discovered and that it was progressively defined by

his sexual orientation” (Broqua 2017, p. 172).<sup>1</sup> This increasing association of the “*góor-jigéen*” with sexuality has derived from a long history in which Western forms of homophobia have been exported to Senegal, first by French colonial administrators and scholars during the late nineteenth and earlier centuries and, since the late 2000s, by religious, political, and media personalities who equate sexual and gender variances with pederasty, debauchery, and decadence. Thus, as Coly (2019) points out, “The invention of the Senegalese homosexual entailed the sociocultural translation of the *goordjiggen* into the homosexual and the construction of the homosexual as disposable life” (Coly 2019, p. 34). A major effect of these processes is the absence of scholarship examining the *gór djiguène*’s contributions to Afropolitanism, namely, his or her participation in the forms of cosmopolitanism that were vibrant in Senegal between the late nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century.

### 3. Defining Afropolitanism

Afropolitanism is cosmopolitanism that evolves in African contexts. The term “Afropolitanism” is a combination of two adjectives: “African” and “cosmopolitanism,” two words which may appear as antithetical to each other even if they are not absolute opposites. According to Neville Hoad, this apparent contradiction stems from the fact that “African is a word that designates a geographic, if not racial, specificity. In contrast, cosmopolitanism aspires to a worldliness unbound by either geography or race and suggests that multiple specificities exist” (Hoad 2007, p. 113). Therefore, Afropolitanism is an inclusive concept since it seeks to bridge the divides between Africanness and world citizenship. In a 2007 essay, entitled “Afropolitanism,” Mbembe urged scholars to study African people’s past and present opportunities “to experience several worlds,” to keep “coming and going, developing an invaluable wealth of perception and sensitivity,” and to be always inventing, “sometimes without their knowing it, a transnational culture” which he calls an “‘Afropolitan’ culture” (Mbembe 2007, p. 29). This Afropolitanism does not have to be located abroad, since, as this essay will show, Senegalese people with non-normative gender and sexual identities were already experiencing it at home from their own individual metropolises.

This essay responds to Mbembe’s charge by exploring the colonial metropolis of Dakar as another example of what, according to Fasselt, he calls “the center of Afropolitanism par excellence” when describing Johannesburg (Fasselt 2015, p. 120). Colonial Dakar was also a “center of Afropolitanism par excellence” since it was a city where vibrant and dissident homosexual and transgender subcultures thrived, though covertly, amidst encounters between white European residents and tourists and non-binary, sexually experimental, and gender-variant black individuals. In Senegal, these black individuals were and are called *gór-djiguène*. This is an umbrella term of the Wolof language meaning “men-women” and describing persons who are perceived as being transgender, homosexual, bisexual, or too effeminate.

A related issue is the neglect and invisibility of European writings about LGBTQI individuals from colonial Senegal. These texts tend to be scientific and administrative reports, written by European colonial administrators or travelers during the past centuries, in which one finds commentaries on variant gender and sexual identities in colonial Senegal. Such texts are mostly available in French, British, and other European rare-manuscript libraries and are inaccessible to most Senegalese scholars who function in homophobic and transphobic intellectual and socio-political contexts that prevent them from consulting and using these sources to understand and counter the marginalizations and

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<sup>1</sup> Broqua writes:

«À l’époque où le *góor-jigéen* n’était pas défini par sa sexualité mais par son (inversion de) genre, l’existence de l’homosexualité elle-même n’était pas connue du plus grand nombre. C’est lorsqu’elle l’est devenue que la sexualité du *góor-jigéen* a été peu à peu découverte et qu’il a progressivement été défini par son orientation sexuelle». (Broqua 2017, p. 172)

Broqua. «*Góor-jigéen*,» 172.

ostracizations of people with variant gender and sexual identities in their nation. These sources' absence in mainstream Senegalese libraries and other settings derive from deliberate national, social, and political attempts to erase LGBTQI histories and experiences from public memories. Speaking about this issue in a continental framework, Achille Mbembe in his essay "The Power of the Archive and its Limits" (2002), how hegemonies hide from the public for fear of losing power or being challenged by subaltern voices (Mbembe 2002, pp. 19–20). Drawing from such a critique of hegemonic control of archives, this essay seeks to inspire a methodology based on the use of neglected writings from Europe or elsewhere to study the experiences of marginalized sexual and gender communities in Senegal. This methodology seeks to reflect the complexity of doing research about the gender expressions and LGBTQI communities in postcolonial African nations in which state leaders, police, and the citizenry continue to sanction both homophobia and transphobia.

My methodology is also based on the inclusion of marginalized Senegalese homosexual and transgender communities in the study of black cosmopolitanism. The scholarship on black cosmopolitanism has often ignored Africa's contributions to this history. For instance, while he recognizes the cosmopolitanism in black Western and diasporan intellectuals' movements, openness, and negotiations of meaning beyond racial and cultural essentialisms (such as, for instance, the interactions between Phillis Wheatley and Olaudah Equiano with enlightenment liberal ideas), Paul Gilroy ignores Africa's role in this cosmopolitanism. Discussing Gilroy's representation of cosmopolitanism in the two books, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Gilroy 1993) and *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Gilroy 2000), Simon Gikandi asserts: "If rootlessness and suffering were enough integers of cosmopolitanism, then what is to deny many of the African refugees scattered throughout the world a cosmopolitan identity?" (Gikandi 2002, p. 610). Expanding the discussion, one can also ask the question, "what about the cosmopolitan identities that have historically thrived in African metropolises for centuries, including those that French colonials, and, later, Davidson, witnessed in Senegal?" Fortunately, Mbembe has given attention to Afropolitanism, providing us with the opportunity to explore how it has functioned in other parts of Africa. Afropolitanism was salient in the transgender and homosexual communities that thrived in colonial Senegal through the ways in which these societies embraced local Senegalese identities while developing world citizenship. These Senegalese interacted with a transnational community on cosmopolitan terms despite the racism and condescension that European expatriates exerted on them.

#### 4. A Brief Review of Cosmopolitan Sexualities in Colonial Senegal

Any study of cosmopolitan sexualities in colonial Senegal must consider Corre's book since it gives us rare insights into the existence of subversive and cosmopolitan sexualities in colonial Senegal. In Corre's book, cosmopolitanism is represented in the ways in which the creoles of colonial Senegal, known as the *signares*, were hybrid populations who derived from open marriages between new European traders or administrators and local African women (Corre 1894, p. 56). These were relations out of which the children bore the name of the father who cared for them and left them with the subsistence means that were accorded to his status when he had to leave the territory (Corre 1894, p. 56). According to Corre, when, upon the intervention of the clergy and colonial administrators, such unions became uncommon, new forms of sexual relationships between whites and the *signares*, in which the indigenous blacks were used as pawns, emerged. Such relationships are also alluded in what Corre describes as the sterile prostitution and the emergence of "*vices contre nature*" [vices against nature] in

extremely private spaces (Corre 1894, p. 56).<sup>2</sup> Even if they were mainly heterosexual, such “extremely private spaces” were ones where homosexuality, transgenderism, and variant forms of sexual and gender practices sometimes occurred in colonial Senegal. Alternative sexual and gender identities were then tolerated under the general Senegalese cosmopolitan philosophy of “*sutura*,” which is a Wolof term with various meanings such as discretion, confidence, respect, and decency predicated on the idea that one must avoid shaming another person just as the latter individual should also do the same. Therefore, “*sutura*” stems from a Senegalese cosmopolitanism that regards an individual as being equal to another one and worthy of honor and protection from shame. Ivy Mills describes “*sutura*” as “a Wolofized Arabic concept that can mean discretion, modesty, privacy, or protection” (Mills 2011, p. 1). According to Mills, the term “mediates the production of the boundary between gendered life and ungendered death” and “produces a communal ‘inside’ of those who possess a refined, ideal form of life and humanness, and an abject ‘outside’ comprised of subjects who possess a bare form of life that is exposed to social and moral death” (Mills 2011, p. 1).

In a similar vein, Coly (2019) argues that “*sutura* pertains to the right to privacy” and adds: “The expression *Niit deñu koy sutural* [you owe your fellow human being discretion] is commonly used in Senegal to stress the right to privacy and call people to order whenever they volunteer indiscreet disclosures about another person” (Coly 2019, p. 38). This cosmopolitan valuation of “*sutura*” was pervasive in colonial Senegalese cultures where it allowed marginalized communities to cross boundaries of race, gender, religion, nationality, class, caste, and sexuality. This cosmopolitanism is apparent in Maryse Condé’s historical novel, *Segu* (1984), which alludes to Jean-Baptiste, a young male slave and servant of Anne Pepin, who was a notable *signare* of the Gorée Island of Senegal. Condé describes Jean-Baptiste as a member of the Bambara ethnic group whose real name was Naba (Condé 1987, p. 97) and whose brother was probably in Timbuktu about the time when his sibling was taken back to Gorée from Saint Louis (Condé 1987, pp. 97–98). Condé also describes how Nicolas Pepin, Anne’s sister, brought Naba back from Saint-Louis where the Governor at the fort wanted to keep him. As Condé points out, the Governor “had paid a high price for Jean-Baptiste because he was so good-looking; he [the Governor] had intended to employ the lad as a footman. But unfortunately Jean-Baptiste had turned out to be afflicted with a kind of lethargy, from which he emerged only to try to commit suicide” (Condé 1987, p. 97).

This fictional anecdote which, as the back-cover of Condé’s novel suggests, is based on “actual events,” helps us understand the kind of sexualized and transgendered subcultures that developed from the contacts between whites and blacks in colonial Senegal. As the description of Jean-Baptiste as a “good-looking” boy indicates, the relationships between French administrators and young African males in colonial Senegal may also convey sexual exploitation, rather than only admiration and cosmopolitanism. The anecdote insinuates colonial administrators’ molestations of young African boys, which sometimes occurred with the discretion of white mistresses who knew that their European male partners and lovers in Africa were often sexually uncontrollable. A case in point is Corre’s report where the author accuses Europeans of having brought pederasty to Algeria and Indochina where a “feminized boy lives next with the mistress and, like her, indiscriminately satisfies the master’s pleasures” (Corre 1894, p. 13).<sup>3</sup> One of these Europeans could have been Isidore Duchâtel, a senior

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<sup>2</sup> Corre writes:

A la naïveté et à la franchise qui la faisaient autrefois tolérer, pour le plus grand profit de la population, des idées de fausse pudeur se sont substituées, qui l’ont fait repousser, et, comme le besoin sexuel n’est pas de ceux qu’on annule avec de saintes paroles, la compensation fatale a été la prostitution stérile ou le développement des vices contre nature dans les milieux trop privés. (Corre 1894, p. 34)

<sup>3</sup> Corre states:

l’Européen a emprunté aux Orientaux certaines habitudes sexuelles; la pédérastie est devenue commune parmi nos troupes algériennes<sup>1</sup>; elle l’est aussi, bien qu’à un moindre degré, chez les fonctionnaires de toutes grandeurs,

French colonial officer in Gorée who, as Condé suggests, wanted to buy Jean-Baptiste and take him to the island of Cape Verde where he wanted to employ him as a flower gardener and a sugarcane, tobacco, and coffee planter (Condé 1987, p. 101). Though she had baptized Jean-Baptiste after changing his Muslim name Naba, Anne succumbed to the demand of her lover whom she suspected “of being unfaithful to her with Negresses, domestic slaves who looked after his house” (Condé 1987, p. 101). The fact that Naba was a Muslim slave from Timbuktu who was probably compelled to adopt a Christian, as well as a homosexual and transgender identity, could reflect a form of French colonial, mental, social, and economic abuse on him. Yet, despite these brutal experiences, one must acknowledge the existence of a colonial Senegalese culture in which one could be queer, Muslim, transgender in “private spaces” with the societal and moral protection of “*sutura*.”

The concept of “*sutura*” has a lot of potential in Senegalese Studies. Against the current polarities brought forth by the homophobic and transphobic discourses in Senegal, Mills proposes a reevaluation of this philosophy in the study of the nation’s cultures. She writes: “In the midst of the raging pro-*sutura* versus anti-*sutura* debate, I propose that a recasting of *sutura* within a progressive Muslim ethos would disarticulate *sutura* from social hierarchies, thus enabling the formation of an ethics of communal care and protection that could still be coded as both Senegalese and Muslim” (Mills 2011, p. 2). From this cosmopolitan perspective, Corre’s representation of the sexually variant people in colonial Senegal is not necessarily negative since he, at least, considers the creole of Senegal as part of the special and privileged groups that he depicts as populations that successfully adapted to the cosmopolitanism of the *mère-patrie* [motherland] of France. He depicts the creoles of Senegal as a part of the hybrid multiracial groups in French colonies such as those of the Antilles (Saint-Christophe, la Dominique, Saint-Lucie), la Reunion, and the islands of the Indian Ocean. Corre writes:

Early on, they created homogenous societies out of populations of different origins. Despite their different categories, these people have found roots in their creole land[s] and, to some extent, share a set of morals and customs with the metropole whose social formula they have adapted into their communities. They have been *assimilated* in an administrative form that is somewhat different from that of our departments. (Corre 1894, p. 422)<sup>4</sup>

Corre’s assertion is important because it serves as a lens through which we can understand the cosmopolitan culture that evolved from the interactions between blacks, whites, and creoles in colonial Senegal. What is also interesting here is that Corre represents the creoles as a part of the indigenous races of the colonies that the French imperial experiment had created. With much paternalism, he depicts the creole as “undeniable proof of the adaptability of great races in all locales and of human cosmopolitanism” (Corre 1894, p. 423).<sup>5</sup> Corre further explains his theory of cosmopolitanism when he

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dans la région indochinoise, où le boy féminisé vit souvent côte à côte avec la maîtresse, tous deux servant indifféremment aux distractions du maître. De ces foyers contaminateurs, elle semblerait s’être étendue à notre armée métropolitaine». (Corre 1894, p. 13)

Armand Corre. *L’ethnographie criminelle*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Corre states:

Elles ont d’assez bonne heure, avec des provenances ethniques très dissemblables, formé des populations homogènes, malgré leurs catégories, populations qui ont pris racine sur leur sol (créoles) et ont acquis, dans une mesure relative, une certaine communauté de mœurs et d’habitudes avec la métropole, grâce à l’adaptation de la même formule sociale. Ce sont des *assimilées*, sous un mode d’administration quelque peu différent de celui de nos départements. (Corre 1894, p. 422)

Corre. *L’ethnographie criminelle*, 422.

<sup>5</sup> A translation of Corre’s full statement is:

Mais comme la vie sociale a toujours été concentrée sur les zones littorales, les races indigènes et immigrées ont dû s’y établir. Si les races indigènes ont à peu près disparu aux Antilles<sup>1</sup>; si elles ont été refoulées loin dans l’intérieur des terres à la Guyane, elles n’ont cédé qu’aux iniques persécutions des envahisseurs, et ceux-ci, comme les races qu’ils ont introduites auprès d’eux, ont pu se perpétuer, au prix de sacrifices nombreux, malgré

represents Africans in the French colonies as people who can easily adapt to the culture of the creoles. He states: “The African man easily blends with lawfully emancipated people with whom he shares the same origin; he is not repulsed by the creole negro woman whom he naturally marries or stays with after engagement” (Corre 1894, p. 444).<sup>6</sup>

However, Corre is critical of cosmopolitanism since he considers it as one of the corruptive tools of civilization and colonialism. Although he believes in the existence of savagery that he perceives as pervasive in the colonies, and not so much in France, Corre considers the people in the colonies to be less criminally inclined than those in the metropole are. Moreover, even if he considers France as being more civilized than the colonies, Corre is not convinced that civilization is better than savagery since he considers all humans as capable of acts of baseness. He writes:

All human races harbor, in essence, selfish and anti-altruistic feelings which can lead them in the same path of intrinsic and extrinsic reactions. These grow with both real and fake needs. It is therefore natural and logical that they should be more limited among child peoples. In general, there are fewer crimes per se in uncivilized environments than in civilized ones. (Corre 1894, p. 506)<sup>7</sup>

In this sense, despite his racism, Corre is a cosmopolitan since he believes that humans have the comparable ability to be egotistic and individualistic. Moreover, Corre eventually denounces the impact of colonialism since he considers it as responsible for carrying over the flaws of the *metropole* into colonies where indigenous populations were not as criminal as the societies of the invaders. Thus, even if he was patriotic about France whose morals he held with high regard, Corre was a critic of French imperialism since he saw it as corrupting and exploiting colonized people rather than helping them. He writes:

Is civilization better than savagery? I do pretend to give neither an affirmative nor an absolutely negative answer.

Civilization helps to destroy certain abhorrent ancestral customs, but it replaces them with degenerating vices.

Colonization is a hypocritical and deceptive process of adaptation.

To colonize and civilize is: to use and misuse power in order to exploit the weak and replace them, to force peoples, who have fulfilling customs and are usually very ethical, to change these customs with new incompatible and corruptive ones.

Let us stop saying or implying that this is the moral or social improvement of dominated races. (Corre 1894, pp. 506–7)<sup>8</sup>

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les conditions mauvaises du climat; preuve indéniable de l’adaptabilité des grandes races à tous les milieux et du cosmopolitisme de l’homme. (Corre 1894, p. 423)

Corre. *L’ethnographie criminelle*, p. 423.

<sup>6</sup> Corre asserts:

l’Africain n’éprouve aucune peine à se fondre dans l’ancienne population de sa provenance, que la loi a émancipée; il n’est point repoussé par la négresse créole au cours de l’engagement, et celui-ci terminé, il contracte aisément mariage ou liaison durable. (Corre 1894, p. 444)

<sup>7</sup> Corre’s original statement is:

Toutes les races humaines ont un même fonds de sentiments égoïstes et antialtruistes, susceptibles de les entraîner dans une même voie de réactions intrinsèques et extrinsèques. Celles-ci croissent avec les besoins, réels ou factices. Il est donc naturel et logique qu’elles soient plus limitées chez les peuples enfants. d’une manière générale, il y a moins de crimes proprement dits dans les-milieux incivilisés que dans les milieux civilisés. (Corre 1894, p. 506)

Corre. *L’ethnographie criminelle*, p. 506.

<sup>8</sup> Corre states:

Therefore, even if he praises France's attempt to spread civilization through its African colonies, Corre ends up dismissing the success of this imperial experiment by stressing the universality of cosmopolitanism, that is, the inherent capacity of all societies to be morally and culturally competent. Here, one should use the word "competent" rather than the term "advanced" because Corre does not necessarily see the African colonies as advanced as France even if he questions the motives of civilization and colonization.

### 5. Colonial Homosexual Subculture in Michael Davidson's "Dakar"

Another European text that helps to write the history of Afropolitan same-sex intimacies in Senegalese history is Davidson's account of his 1949 journey to Dakar. Davidson's narrative is crucial since it shows that cosmopolitan transgender and homosexual subcultures existed in Dakar's *bidonvilles* [shanty towns], which is a fact that recent literature acknowledges. According to Epprecht's book, *Unspoken Facts: A History of Homosexualities in Africa* (2008), by the 1940s and 1950s, small gay scenes had begun to appear in Dakar's *bidonvilles* (Epprecht 2008, p. 119). A French word for slums, *bidonvilles* are outskirts districts such as Medina, Pikine, and Fass, where the poorest populations in colonial Dakar were concentrated. According to Mike Davis, *bidonvilles* were also the areas where the French colonials "consigned" the "African town-dwellers to grim peripheries," following patterns that already existed in colonial West African cities such as Treichville (in Abidjan) and Poto-poto (in Brazzaville) where the streets "were nothing but sand and mud alleyways instead of drainage there were only a few sewers, usually open or crudely covered with flag-stones" (Davis 2006, p. 53). Davis continues: "[T]here was little or no water, with a few public pumps where queues waited from early in the morning. Public lighting was reserved for the European quarters. Overcrowding created a great hazard to health" (Davis 2006, p. 53). In a similar vein, Cattedra (2006) describes a *bidonville* like that of Pikine as the district where the French colonials moved "*les déguerpis*" [the unwanted populations] of colonial Dakar (Cattedra 2006, p. 141). Yet it was in such slums where a cosmopolitan transgender and homosexual subculture evolved in the relationships between not only the wealthy and poor classes of the city but also in those among the blacks and whites in the metropolis.

Moreover, a fluid and shifting dynamic evolved in Dakar where, as Mamadou Diouf argues, "the convergence of different communities, cultures, and religions, is reflected in the architecture, the organization, and allocation of space, and the mode of inhabiting, imagining, and representing the fragmented and very tightly policed territories constituting Dakar as a colonial space" (Diouf 2008, p. 348). According to Diouf, colonial Dakar was "a space of hybrid identities and plural exchanges produced by a network of power relations that were unstable, unpredictable, ambiguous, and disorderly" (Diouf 2008, p. 348). These contentious and transgressive, yet exciting, cultural and social relationships provided the fertile ground where cosmopolitan identities, including variant sexual and gender identities, prospered in colonial Dakar in usually veiled forms.

Davidson also describes a city of Dakar where, like in the rest of the Senegalese colonial territory, homosexuality was "rife" (Davidson 1970, p. 165). Davidson was surprised to see such a subculture in vast plains where a few Senegalese people, who were "buried in history and ethnography," indulged in

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La civilisation vaut-elle donc moins que l'état sauvage? Je ne prétends pas répondre par une affirmative, non plus que par une négative absolue.

La civilisation contribue à détruire certaines habitudes ancestrales certainement très détestables, mais elle les remplace par des vices très dégénératifs.

La colonisation est un de ses procédés d'adaptation hypocrite et trompeuse.

Coloniser et civiliser, cela veut dire : user et abuser de la force pour exploiter les faibles et se substituer à eux, contraindre des peuples, en possession d'habitudes à leur convenance et souvent très morales, à échanger celles-ci contre de nouvelles, pour eux très incompatibles avec leurs tendances et très corruptrices.

Qu'on cesse de répéter ou de vouloir donner à entendre que cela est l'équivalent d'une amélioration morale ou sociale pour les races soumises. (Corre 1894, pp. 506–7)

homosexuality (Davidson 1970, p. 165). While it shows that homosexuality was not absent in Senegalese culture of the mid-twentieth century, Davidson's narrative reflects the frequent homogenization of the "other" in European representations of Africa that he later criticizes when he writes: "The ordinary American and European who doesn't know about Africa thinks that it's all the same—just Africans, looking the same, coloured the same, speaking the same" (Davidson 1970, p. 165). Though he believes that it is "nonsense" to see Africans in this monolithic way, Davidson seems to replicate this European homogenizing representation of Africans through the manners in which he depicts his homosexual escapades in Senegal. For instance, reflecting what seems to be an inappropriate experience, Davidson describes his "date with a barefoot black boy" who had picked him up "the night before" he "declined an invitation to dine with the Governor-General of French West Africa" (Davidson 1970, p. 163). Davidson then recollects an evening he spent in a flat with a boy whose "lean—yet so loving—ebony body" and "clinging of his limbs" were in his mind twenty years later (Davidson 1970, pp. 163–64). Davidson's portrayal of the black boy's body as "lean" and "loving" conveys his homoerotic attractions to the youth, revealing a disturbing sense of pedophilic impulse. The pleasure he receives from watching the young "black boy" is both inappropriate and exploitative since it derives from either a sexual encounter with or desirability for a juvenile, reinforcing the popular stereotyping of European homosexuals in Senegal as pedophiles.

Davidson's attitudes corroborate the view of Serigne Fallou Dieng, the president of the Cercle des intellectuels soufis (Circle of soufis intellectuals) of Senegal, who accuses European tourists of encouraging pedophilia in the country (Dione 2006, p. 44). Davidson somewhat legitimizes the stereotyping of European tourists in Africa as sexual sojourners who travel to the Third World in search of sexual licenses that are denied to them in the West. He describes the African boy with whom he had relations as one of the "shoeshine boys who squat on the pavement-edge with their wooden boxes of pads and brushes, quarrelling and joking over each newly arrived customer, flashing their huge white eyes around the people sitting at the tables, and exchanging an endless backchat of jolly obscenities—an anarchical, ebullient company of charmingly-mannered bandits whose only cares were hunger and which doorstep to sleep on tonight" (Davidson 1970, p. 164). In this sense, Davidson fits the stereotypical association of European tourists with pedophilia since he perceives the vulnerable "shoeshine boys" as available for his taking, transforming these teenagers into prostitutes who service the wealthy white travelers like him.

Yet, in spite of his sexual objectification of the "shoeshine boys," Davidson sometimes represents them in a positive light as individuals who have a substantial degree of Afropolitan agency and power. Such a positive outlook is apparent when Davidson depicts the "shoeshine boy" with whom he had sex as a youngster who has an admirable resolve to live free from any social confinement. He writes:

The very sparkle of his nature, the very warmth of his response, enhanced his pathos, the desperate sadness of the young life ahead of him. Scarcely out of his childhood—from all I could make out of his touching chatter—he was on his own: of family, he knew none; if there were any government or charitable institutions looking for him and his like, he carefully eluded them—with that natural instinct which prizes liberty above everything else. He earned what centimes he could as a part-time shoeblack. What chance could there be for a part-timer? (Davidson 1970, p. 164)

This assertion reflects Afropolitanism through the ways it represents the shoeshine boy as an agent of a new dawn and modernity in colonial Senegalese society in spite of his low financial means. In a similar sense, Ryan Thomas Skinner represents "Afropolitanism," as Mbembe also does, that is, as a concept that should be "wrest" from "its narrow, elitist connotations, in order to address the ways contemporary Africans encounter, negotiate, mediate, make claims on, and give shape to the world of which they are a formative part" (Skinner 2017, p. 11). This Afropolitanism is evident in the shoeshine boy's power to garner and channel his own sense of freedom and ability to act beyond the confines of established boundaries. Such freedom over handed-down rules which would have pitted this errant, yet inventive and determined youngster, as a vagrant and a misfit teenager to protect from society,

is quintessentially Afropolitan. This freedom demonstrates the youngster's power to bridge divides between not only the past and the present, but also African and other world cultures. Afropolitanism allows blacks and other marginalized people to be free and thrive in many contexts. For instance, as Balakrishnan (2017) argues, within Taiye Selasi's theory of Afropolitanism, the African diaspora could no longer be represented "as a scattered tribe of pharmacists, physicists and the odd polygamist"; instead, the Afropolitans chose jobs in art, music, politics, or design, preferring the creative high society to fields traditionally reserved for immigrants. They lived in the metropolitan capitals of the world, 'achieving things [their] "people" in the grand sense only dreamed of'" (Balakrishnan 2017, p. 6).

The shoeshine boy's ability to thrive in Senegal and freely move across the divides between the local and the transnational (as well as those between the past and the present) shows that Afropolitanism is not the sole property of the intercontinental African diaspora migrant; it also belongs to Africans who stay at home and remain connected to the rest of the world. Thus, Afropolitanism is eventually not restricted by elitism, geographic boundary, class, or creed since even the stereotypically dispossessed and marginalized African can deploy it to register a power to not only "dream" of other worlds, but also to act in and shape local, modern, and global cultures. In this sense, Afropolitanism is fundamentally a process of liberating oneself with the power of modernity and globalization. Grace Adeniyi Ogunyankin explains: "Another key aspect of Afropolitan Imagineering is commodity consumption whereby both the world and Africa consume products that are distinctively 'Afropolitan' (hint of a distinct Africanness but 'Afro-cool' in its association with modernity and cosmopolitanism) and Africa also conspicuously consumes the world" (Ogunyankin 2018, p. 1146). The shoeshine boys' perceptions of intimate relations with the wealthy white tourists as practical means of enhancing their lives is a form of Afropolitan Imagineering since it registers their faith in globalization's and consumerism's power to connect them with the rest of the world and improve their existence.

Moreover, Davidson's travelogue reflects his admiration of his favorite "shoeshine boy[s]" insatiable quest of Afropolitan freedom from the grip of "government or charitable institutions" who probably wanted to take children like him off the streets of Dakar and into modern French or Koranic schools, which were the main tools of inculcation of morality and civism into the minds of the young generation during colonization in Senegal. By asking "What chance could there be for a part-timer?" such as a "shoeshine boy" in colonial Dakar, Davidson laments the precarious social and economic plight that awaited such an individual who lived as an outcast. Over the years, Dakar's "shoeshine boys" have seen their conditions deteriorate at such high rates that these youngsters are treated like Koranic schools' street beggars (known as the *talibés*) as social pariahs. Bop (2019) denounces the hypocritical ways in which many *talibés* have been reportedly subjected to the exploitation of Koranic schoolteachers who either subject them to pedophilia or expect them to beg from the streets and bring earned money and goods to them. In addition, there are daily sexual abuses perpetrated by other adults against young *talibés*. In her sociological study, entitled *Nandité: Enquête sur les enfants dans les rues de Dakar* (2010), Fatou Dramé reports an incident in which Ali, a ten-year-old *talibé* from Dakar tells P that his friends and him always stick together so as to resist the robbery or sexual abuse of *les grands* [the adults] (Dramé 2010, p. 85). Such revelations suggest the grave crimes to which the *talibés* and other street kids are subjected in Dakar and the hypocrisy of Muslim and administrative elites who are prone to accuse the pedophilia of Western tourists while turning a blind eye to the similar endogenous child sexual abuse in Senegal. As Bop (2019) suggests, "the defenders of the family and of religious and moral values" have never raised their voices about such "serious crimes."

Moreover, Davidson's narrative represents the conditions of transgender individuals he saw in 1958 in Dakar, a city where he had returned nine years after his first trip. Davidson says that "the Dakar of 1958 was the Paris of Africa" (Davidson 1970, p. 166) since it was different from the Dakar of 1949 which was full of *bidonvilles*. Describing how the city was in 1949, Davidson writes: "Dakar at that time, except for the grandiose administrative palaces of the French Government and their social equals, the commercial edifices of the great French firms which made their fortunes out of products like peanut oil and phosphates, seemed to be a sprawling maze of African huts and shantytown suburbs—'bidonvilles'"

(Davidson 1970, p. 164). However, in both the previous and slightly modernized Dakar, Davidson encountered a covert, yet vibrant, transgender subculture that dared to invade private spaces which customarily belonged to the French colonials. It is here that, in 1958, “in a rather low bar, just off the city’s principal boulevard and in the heart of the French quarter,” Davidson saw a *gôr djiguène* whose apparition into the pub he describes as a dramatic moment for both European and African onlookers. Davidson writes:

And suddenly, into this typically small-town ambience of the French provinces, there swished a middle-aged *tapette* with an ebony skin, orange silk bellbottoms, a sky-blue satin blouse and dangling gold earrings—and this was some ten years before our male sartorial revolution in Europe and America. He seemed about the campest thing I’ve ever seen: the featherweight lithe figure of a boy dancer, the giggles and lisps and little shrieks, as he toyed with his *bock* of pale beer, of a coquettish schoolgirl, and the wrinkles and ogling knowingness of an ageing queen. (Davidson 1970, p. 167)

According to *Le nouveau dictionnaire des mots croisés* (Lazure 2006), “*tapette*” is a French word meaning “homosexuel efféminé” [an effeminate homosexual] (Lazure 2006, p. 481). In Senegalese Wolof parlance, the word “*tapette*” is sometimes translated as “*gôr djiguène*,” which is a word that is often spelled in many ways such as “*goorjigeen*” and “*goor jiggen*.” Davidson’s reference to a *tapette* in the quotation above may be the strongest validation of the identity of a *gôr djiguène* in colonial Senegal. The statement reflects the kind of cosmopolitanism that characterized Dakar in the mid-twentieth century when a transgender subculture was able to gain some acceptance in the larger Senegalese society and receive substantial visibility among European tourists who were also an integral part of the colony’s metropolises. It is important to remember that a metropolis is one of the most fertile grounds of Afropolitanism. Balakrishnan (2017) writes: “Afropolitanism, contra Pan-Africanism or négritude, located its liberating potential inside the multifarious transnational exchanges of ideas and belongings occurring all over the continent but especially in the African metropolis. By studying these sites as futurist zones, the colonial city’s violent pasts became also refocused as a precondition to post-racial universalism. The Afropolitan idea was an emancipatory one, claiming Africa as the future while simultaneously letting go of its colonial past” (Balakrishnan 2017, p. 8).

Davidson recognizes the importance of Dakar’s colonial metropolis where he found a respectable Afropolitan subculture. He perceives this culture as an important part of a modernized and cosmopolitan city where a *tapette* was able to transgress restrictive boundaries between masculinity and femininity in Senegal, “ten years before” men in “Europe and America” began to ask for similar freedom (Davidson 1970, p. 167). By challenging established Senegalese masculinity through a countercultural accoutrement combining “orange silk bellbottoms, a sky-blue satin blouse and dangling gold earrings,” the *gôr djiguène* Davidson saw in Dakar was a pioneer of a gender and sexual revolution that conveyed a great sense of freedom and agency which must be acknowledged as part of Senegal’s history and culture. This *gôr djiguène* is important in Senegal’s history since s/he was also a pioneer in the dismantlement of the French colonial authority’s hegemony on public spaces of entertainments, such as bars and hotels, where the local inhabitants of the *bidonvilles* were not expected to be unless they brought sexual pleasure and other entertainments for the Europeans. Discussing how a *gôr djiguène* is received in a French bar of Dakar, Davidson also writes: “Obviously there were no customers for him in this bar—the few Frenchmen on their barstools still gazed sadly into their glasses, apparently unaware of this sudden shrill presence. The *patronne* served him his beer and took his money, and exchanged with him the usual pleasantries of the evening; to her he was a customer: for any Frenchwoman who sits at the till, it’s the till that makes the social rules” (Davidson 1970, p. 27). The *gôr djiguène*’s presence in this colonial French bar demonstrates both cosmopolitanism and Afropolitanism. It reveals cosmopolitanism through the ways in which this person is allowed to be an “individual” who deserves the same status of “customer” of a bar that is given to the French patrons even if he might have been a sex worker just like many of the European women in the saloon. The *gôr djiguène*’s presence uses this cosmopolitanism to create an African social, cultural, and economic freedom in a colonial context in

which private spaces empowered by “*sutura*” provided a Senegalese the means to resist racial, cultural, and gendered dominance.

This *gôr djiguène*'s ability to challenge binarism and tyranny through movement and negotiation reveals the kind of power that Skinner also sees in his theory of Afropolitanism. According to Skinner: “It is an Afropolitanism conceived and constituted through multiple and intersecting itineraries: of women and other socially and culturally marginalized groups making claims on society and (re)inventing traditions; of travelers seeking refuge and asylum and imagining new lives far from home” (Skinner 2017, p. 16). Therefore, in spite of its marginalizing effect, transgressive sexuality was a form of Afropolitanism since it empowered the *gôr djiguène* to achieve the same kind of power that Ania Loomba credits to postcolonial literature, which is to “appropriate” and “inscribe” aspects of the “‘other’ cultures” as a means of “inverting or challenging dominant means of representation and colonial ideologies” (Loomba 2007, p. 63). The *gôr djiguène* that Davidson saw in the “low bar” of Dakar achieves these goals by disrupting a space which was reserved for the social gathering of European men who took advantage of the absence of their wives to reinforce their heterosexuality through the sexual service of French and Senegalese men and women prostitutes. Such a disruption of European and heterosexual space with non-binary cosmopolitan sexuality and gender identity is apparent when Davidson describes how two “French tarts” began to verbally abuse the “*tapette*” whom they saw as “trespassing in their beat” and “taking a living away from honest girls like us” (Davidson 1970, p. 168). Thus, the French women prostitutes perceive the “*tapette*” as a person who disrupts their social and economic space by reducing the gains they make from prostitution. Consequently, class, not sexuality, race, nationality, or religion, is the main reason why the French female prostitutes become condescending toward the *gôr djiguène* who comes to the bar. As Davidson suggests, the abuse of the French “tarts” at the “*tapette*” is an act that “wasn’t directed at his being gay, at his being a queen, at his sexual morality or his sexual practice, nor at his colour—they abused him simply because, so they alleged, he was trespassing in their beat” (Davidson 1970, p. 168).

Yet identity and social status cannot be discounted in the abuse since the French women prostitutes later use a racially dismissive language in order to force the *gôr djiguène* out of the bar. The French women prostitutes tell the *gôr djiguène*: “Can’t you go somewhere else—can’t you go to your own bars? Why’ve you got to spoil our trade? You’re just a lousy spoil-trade, that’s what you are” (Davidson 1970, p. 168). By seeking the reasons why the *gôr djiguène* can’t go to her or his “own bars,” the French women somewhat reflect a bias that could also come from racism even though the rest of the sentence suggests that it primarily derives from classism. In this sense, the French women prostitutes may view the Senegalese transgender woman as a person whose presence challenges both their status of major sexual providers as well as their colonial and racial hegemony in the bar.

Davidson’s narrative is additionally important because it validates the significance of a transgender subculture in colonial Dakar even if the account frequently reflects the author’s patriarchal and Western biases toward such a community. On the one hand, Davidson suggests a great deal of warmth and affection in the ways in which he perceives this society as an underground community of individuals who defied Dakar’s established patriarchal order by creating a space in which they freely expressed their gender identity beyond racial and social boundaries. Traveling in 1958 with a local Senegalese man who showed him a hidden part of Dakar, Davidson came to a secluded location where he saw a vibrant and young transgender community. He writes: “The place was full of adolescent Africans in drag. *In drag*. I mean that most of them were indeed in girls’ clothes—some in European, some wearing the elaborate headdress of the West African mode \*—it was in fact a drag party; and, apart from ourselves and perhaps two or three African onlookers of adult age, nobody there, I judged, was more than eighteen years old and most were around fifteen” (Davidson 1970, pp. 170–71). According to Davidson, “the elaborate headdress of the West African mode” is “a mode, with the high-waisted booboo, introduced by the fashionable French ladies who, when their husbands colonized Saint-Louis de Senegal in the eighteenth century, made that city almost as elegant as it is today” (Davidson 1970, p. 171). As Davidson’s observations suggest, colonial French women’s fashion influenced Senegalese

women's fashion, especially that of the *signares* of the four communes of Senegal, and, ultimately, the transgender culture that evolved in these towns. In their fashion, sexuality, race, skin-tone, culture, and other traits, the *signares* represented the core virtues of Senegalese society while serving as cosmopolitan intermediaries between African and other world (especially Western) cultures. The *signares*'s fashion and tastes ultimately influenced those of other Senegalese populations "whose roots in Senegal," as MacKinnon (2018) argues, "were at least as deep as their connections to the Atlantic world and to Europe." This is a rare example of a rich and Afropolitan subculture in colonial Dakar. Experimentation with fashion and style is also part of Afropolitanism. Moreover, as Skinner points out, "Afropolitanism" also include uses "of texts, images, and recordings shared and streamed via Bluetooth, over the internet, and in real life; and of the forms, styles, spaces, and subcultures that make up a varied and vital popular culture. And it is an Afropolitanism that resists narrow and particular definition" (Skinner 2017, p. 16).

The transgender youth that Davidson and his informant met in colonial Dakar in 1958 epitomized this Afropolitanism which drew upon the power of elegant dress and fashion to freely play with gender in a predominantly Muslim society. By combining both European and West African fashion, this transgender Senegalese community reflected a distinctive form of black cosmopolitan modernity that was embracing itself in drag in the absence of societal acceptance. This transgender community is an Afropolitan subculture that creates its own and covert space of "*sutura*" on the margins of a mainstream and hegemonic society that does not recognize it. Such a community is a subculture because it evokes the kinds of patterns that George Chauncey saw in the bonding between imprisoned working-class homosexuals and the gay society in 1930s New York, which allowed the community "to reject the prescriptions of the dominant culture and to forge an alternative culture of their own" (Chauncey 1994, p. 3). According to Chauncey, this homosexual subculture that evolved in New York "almost thirty years before the birth of the gay liberation movement at Stonewall" was described by two researchers as an alarming situation since "it promotes the feeling of homosexual solidarity, and withdraws this group more and more from conventional folkways and confirms them in their feeling that they compose a community within the community, with a special and artificial life of their own" (Chauncey 1994, p. 3). The transgender community that Davidson saw in Senegal was a similar kind of subculture since it thrived in a secluded *bidonville* of Dakar which Davidson describes as a "sort of peripheral slum [that] always attracts police interference" (Davidson 1970, p. 169). On this outskirts that Davidson also describes as "this labyrinth of sad—and even a little sinister—dreariness," the young Senegalese transgender people are able to create a private space where they can appropriate Senegalese womanhood as a means to perform variegated and gendered identities that reveal a resistive Afropolitanism. This Afropolitanism is apparent in the hybridized gender that the non-binary Senegalese perform by incorporating into their appropriated womanhood a blend of African and European fashion that Davidson does not sometimes appreciate. He writes:

They danced together; they camped around like a pride of primadonnas; they came to our table and drank lots of beer with us simpering, blinking their white-powdered eyelids, widening their great carmined lips. Cosmetics—at least the colouring kind—don't suit the African face: the skin anyway is much better protected than is the "white" against the hideosities inflicted by climate or ill health; and perhaps for that very reason makeup produces a bizarre and sometimes an eerie effect when sloshed over an African complexion. (Davidson 1970, p. 171)

This statement suggests Davidson's ambivalent representation of Africans. His representation of the Senegalese drag performers' white-powdered "eyelids" and "carmined lips" as "hideosities" that cosmetics create on the "African face" stereotypes the transgender Senegalese as awkward, if not, animalistic. His primitivizing of the transgender Senegalese contradicts his positive depiction of these individuals as a "pride of primadonnas" who "had pleasant manners [.] were friendly and undemanding, and [were] bubbling with jokes of a tartish kind" (Davidson 1970, p. 171). These epithets reflect the ways Senegalese transgendered individuals possess "pleasant" demeanors that can teach us much about the contributions of sexualized and marginalized subcultures and identities to African and

black cosmopolitanisms. Hoad makes strong contributions to the study of the latter concepts when he represents the 2001 novel, *Welcome to Hillbrow*, of South African writer, Phaswane Mpe, as a book that “further mobilizes us to imagine a cosmopolitanism in Africa, in Hillbrow, an inner-city neighborhood in Johannesburg, as well as a cosmopolitanism that is African in the world of postapartheid South Africa” (Hoad 2007, p. 113). The transgender subculture that Davidson describes in his travel narrative constitutes another example of a cosmopolitan community in colonial Africa.

Moreover, in spite of his strong respect for Dakar’s colonial transgender community, Davidson occasionally depicts this society in frequently patriarchal terms since it is developed through the lenses of a European masochistic outlook which occasionally perceives effeminacy as a weakening of masculinity. Although he admired the Senegalese transgender people’s creation of a space where they were able to embrace their feminine identities, Davidson was repulsed by the ways in which this femininity was allowing the marginalized individuals to appropriate and domesticate into their modern and African identities a whiteness that was thus far the privilege of European culture only. According to Ames (1959), in the eighteenth century, “The negro who added the exotic touch to the rococo boudoir [in Europe] was nine times out of ten from Senegal,” while “a considerable number [who] were taken to Europe as pages and servants” during that century was “Wolof” (Ames 1959, p. 30). As the descendants of these Africans who, like those in colonial Senegal, were also used as exotic appendages and servants of European courts and mansions, the transgender Senegalese Davidson encountered were so familiar with the customs of their colonial masters that they were able to declare their freedom from them by creating new cultures born out of a mixture of both their ancestral (African) traditions and received (French) civilizations. Cosmetics were a significant part of these new cultures since they reflected the Senegalese’s creation of an African cosmopolitanism that was invented out of pastiche—that is, an assortment of identities that are blended into the emerging, yet very feminine, postcolonial Senegalese society. Such a hybrid culture is apparent in Ames’s description of the distinctive fashion of Senegalese women in the middle of the twentieth century. Ames (1959) writes: “The Wolof, especially the women, have invented an appearance quite as artificial and quite as decorative as the polite European eighteenth century, with its wigs, powder and hoops. The gestures and language of polite intercourse are stylised and graceful” (Ames 1959, p. 38). Such a new and elegant feminine fashion is a new Afropolitan and Afro-modern culture that the transgender Senegalese in Davidson’s narrative appropriate and perform through “a display of effeminacy” that the gay European author sometimes finds as repulsive, not because of “any moral biliousness” but due to his being “repelled by an extreme exhibition of it [in boys]” (p. 171). In this sense, Davidson’s occasionally condescending views about the transgender Senegalese stem from his inherent patriarchal preference of maleness over femaleness, which is a subjective discrimination that he can’t shatter despite his homosexual identity.

## 6. Conclusions

Davidson’s “Dakar,” like Corre’s *L’ethnographie criminelle*, are European writings that scholars can study to validate the scholarly and historical significance of variant and non-binary sexualities and gender identities in colonial Senegalese societies. As discussions of examples from these two writings suggest, Afropolitanism allowed colonial Senegalese communities to have the cultural backdrop for a sexual agency and the freedom to play with gender and sexuality. This Afropolitanism also refers to how certain African intellectual and artistic expressions break taboos and closure in favor of experimentation and openness toward the globe. As this essay has shown, the concept of Afropolitanism can be enlarged to also refer to the creative ways in which Senegalese transgender subcultures that thrived in colonial Senegal, especially in the late nineteenth century and during the 1940s and 50s, resisted racial, imperial, and heteronormative dominance. As part of this history, the community of transgender individuals that Davidson describes in his travelogue, “Dakar,” is an example of the dissident and creative, yet overlooked, colonial Senegalese societies that can teach us much about the Afropolitan subcultures that thrived in Africa before the 1960s. This community of transgender Senegalese sexual workers

and drag performers was cosmopolitan since it interacted with Dakar's poor neighborhoods and intermingled with the European tourists of the metropolis, despite the condescension and competition of white women sex workers. These Senegalese transgender individuals made strong contributions to Senegalese history and culture that must be studied since they reflect the power of Afropolitanism as a means for overcoming the marginality that people with alternative sexual and gender identities faced in colonial Senegal.

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