Black and White:
Michel Tournier, Anatole France & Genesis

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Abstract:

This article deals with Michel Tournier as a writer of hypertexts. The first chapter of *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar* is considered with respect to two possible unmarked hypotextual connections. The first is a short story by Anatole France entitled "Balthasar," and the Song of Songs is the key element that connects France's and Tournier's texts. The second is an episode from Genesis which I term The Sister-Wife Hoax. The main concern in this study is the issue of human dignity as it relates to race and sexuality.*

Introduction: Hypertextuality

Gérard Genette begins his discussion of hypertextuality with two major requirements: "La dérivation de l'hypotexte à l'hypertexte est à la fois massive (toute une œuvre B dérivant de toute une œuvre A) et déclarée, d'une manière plus ou moins officielle" (16). However, in his discussion of various hypertextual genres, Genette admits that the idea of a "dérivation déclarée" is too restrictive. Therefore, he adds that "il faudra donc aller sensiblement plus loin, en commençant par ces pratiques manifestes et en allant vers de moins officielles" (16). I would like to take his qualification a step further by placing hypertextuality on a continuum of *markedness.* At one end of the continuum would be found fully marked hypertexts indicating very overtly their hypotextual origins (usually through such obvious paratextual indicators as titles [Genette 91). Further along we would encounter hypertexts marked in a less overt way, i.e., through paratextual indicators that are not immediately accessible but available to careful readers nonetheless. And closer to the other pole would be located texts completely unmarked as hypertexts. These could be called *possible* hypertexts, and it is this form of hypertextuality that I would like to consider in the present essay. For this purpose I would like to turn to an author repeatedly cited by Genette as an exemplary "hypertextualist": Michel Tournier.

Tournier's *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar* is arguably the most suitable of the author's works for the exploration of the hypertextual continuum. As a whole, it constitutes a fully marked hypertext of the Magi pericope from Matthew 2. However, underneath this general hypertextual umbrella we find other hypertextual layers. This does not contradict Genette's first requirement of hypertextuality ("toute une œuvre B dérivant de toute une œuvre A" [see above]) because each chapter can be viewed as a potentially independent narrative unit. The first step along the hypertextual continuum and away from full markedness is taken by the last chapter: *Taor, prince de Mangalore.* This is

a hypertext derived from two hypotexts: Edzard Schaper's *Die Legende vom vierten König* and Henry van Dyke's *The Story of the Other Wise Man* (Lapouge 32)*.* These sources are given in the post-scriptum following the text of *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar* (1980: 277), which constitutes a degree of markedness considerably weaker than that of the whole novel. No one can miss the title with its clear hypotextual indication, but a brief reference outside the text proper is something quite different.

I will not discuss *Taor, prince de Mangalore* at length here because I have already done it elsewhere (cf. Tumanov 1997). The only detail to be added at this point has to do with the hypertextual status of the Taor chapter. Although it does come under the hypertextual umbrella of the general hypotext, i.e., Matthew 2, its connection with the New Testament is mediated by Schaper's and van Dyke's respective works. This means that, according to Genette's classification, *Taor, prince de Mangalore* is a hyper-hypertext (425). Hyper-hypertextuality is found elsewhere in Tournier, as Genette points out: *Vendredi ou la vie sauvage* is a hyper-hypertext of *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* which is a hypertext of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe.* And, as I intend to propose, this "Tournierian" phenomenon also characterizes the first chapter of *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar* entitled: *Gaspard, roi d Méroé.*

The story of Gaspard, the black magus of tradition who goes to Bethlehem with the other two magi, constitutes the next step on the hypertextuality continuum, i.e., possible hypertextuality. Just as in the case of *Taor, prince de Mangalore,* the connection of the Gaspard chapter with the umbrella hypotext from Matthew is mediated by another text. This text is a short story by Anatole France entitled *Balthasar* (1889). Because *Gaspard, roi de Méroé* is unmarked as a hyper-hypertext, there are no paratextual indicators to support this argument. However, the connections between Tournier's and France's stories are so striking that possible hypertextuality is a very likely explanation for these similarities.

Balthasar

Anatole France's *Balthasar* deals with the black magus from what tradition has made of Matthew's Nativity pericope. France calls the protagonist of his hypertext Balthasar, although in an earlier version of the story (entitled *Histoire de Gaspar et de la reine de Saba)* the experience of this character is attributed to the Arab magus Gaspar. The latter was written in 1884, and it deals only with what was to become the ending of *Balthasar.* The issue of the black magus's name appears to be a moot point in Christian tradition. Benedict T. Viviano says that traditionally Gaspard (Caspar) is black (635), but *Le Petit Robert 2* says that Gaspard is Asiatic (708) while Balthasar is black (168). Raymond Brown, on the other hand, cites an early medieval source *(Excerpta et Collectanea)* that presents Gaspard as "ruddy complexioned" and Balthasar — as "black-skinned and heavily bearded" (199). This lack of consensus regarding the name of the black magus is reflected in the difference between the names of France's and Tournier's respective protagonists.

Apart from the reference to the gifts, there is nothing in Matthew about the individual magi. Therefore, in order to construct a hypertext of the Nativity periscope, France resorted to what Genette calls *amplification,* i.e., he filled in the details (Genette 309). *Balthasar* opens with an allusion to Song of Songs 1:5: "En ce temps-là, Balthasar, que les Grecs ont nommé Saracin, regnait en Éthiopie. *Il était noir, mais beau de visage"* (587; my italics). The significance of the last sentence is the key to understanding France's and Tournier's respective stories, as well as their relationship. In the Song of Songs, the Beloved accounts for the color of her skin to the Lover: "Dark am I, yet lovely. [...] Do not stare at me because I am dark, because I am darkened by the sun. My mother's sons were angry with me and made me take care of the vineyards; my own vineyard I have neglected" (156). Even though in the Old Testament the issue is not race, France concentrates on the notion of dark skin as a *liability* and makes that his thematic focus. Thus, Balthasar falls in love

with a white woman: Balkis, the Queen of Sheba.[2] And, in line with the opening of the story, the issue of race in this relationship is central. This is evident from the following exchange between Balkis and Balthasar: " 'Seigneur, on dit que vous aimez la reine Candace, votre voisine. Ne me trompez pas: est-elle plus belle que moi? [...]' 'La reine Candace est noire,' répondit Balthasar. Balkis regarda vivement Balthasar et dit: 'On peut être noir sans être laid'. 'Balkis!' s'écria le roi." (589). After the consummation of their passion, Balkis rejects Balthasar, which causes him terrible anguish. This rejection of black by white serves as the starting point of the hero's quest which takes him to Bethlehem and the discovery of love in Christ. Divine love offers itself as a replacement for human love and thereby consoles the hero.

The Song of Songs also helps to make the connection between dark skin on the one hand and the juxtaposition of divine and human love on the other hand. The traditional interpretation of the Song of Songs has been an allegorical one: it is a symbolic representation of the love between God and His people. However, Roland E. Murphy argues that the Song of Songs in its original intent had to do only with human love: "Canticle of Canticles was not written as an allegory. In the literal historical sense it refers to love between humans. When the details are transposed to another level, the door is open to fanciful interpretations which disfigure the original insight" (463). Therefore, by incorporating both types of love — human (Balkis) and divine (Christ) — into the protagonist's experience, and by making him consider their relative value, France uses the Song of Songs as a *mise en abyme* of Balthasar's quest. The darkness of the king's skin ends up shedding light on human emotional and spiritual priorities.

All of these key elements are present in Tournier's *Gaspard, roi de Méroé.* To begin with, the text also opens with Song of Songs 15: "Je suis noir, mais je suis roi. Peut-être ferai-je un jour inscrire sur le tympan de mon palais cette paraphrase du chant de la Sulamite *Nigra sum sed formosa"* (1980: 10). As in

France's story, the conjunction "mais" (sed) is used to launch the theme of blackness as a liability which constitutes the nucleus of the Gaspard chapter (cf. Susan Petit, 1986: 56). The development of this notion follows along the same lines as in France's *Balthasar:* Tournier's black magus also falls in love with a white woman - Biltine. Just as with Balkis and Balthasar, the relationship between Biltine and Tournier's black magus is cut short when Gaspar discovers that he is not wanted. Even before this, the protagonist is given to understand that Biltine cannot tolerate the color of his skin when she vomits as a result of making love to him (Tournier 1980: 26). Like France's Balthasar, Tournier's Gaspard is devastated by this rejection, which prompts him to seek a solution by turning to the star of Bethlehem. In Bethlehem he discovers divine love through Christ, and, similarly to France's magus, correctly understands the love hierarchy in the dual interpretation of the Song of Songs (1980: 218-221).

The perception of his skin color as a liability by France's Balthasar implies the elevation of white skin, i.e., a form of idolatrous worship. These religious overtones are suggested by the intensity of Balthasar's obsession with Balkis and by the protagonist's desire to elevate the queen's white skin as something *qualitatively* different from his own humanity. But most importantly, Balkis and the star of Bethlehem are presented as rivals contending for the king's love, i.e., as analogous objects of religious adoration. After Balkis changes her mind about her rejection of Balthasar and travels to his kingdom, the star says to Balthasar: " `Aime-moi, et n'aime les créatures qu'en moi, car seul je suis l'amour.' [...] La reine Balkis observait Balthasar. Elle comprit qu'il n'y aurait plus jamais d'amour pour elle dans ce cœur rempli par l'amour divin" (599). In the end, the wrong object of veneration is replaced with the right one, echoing the dichotomy of love associated with the Song of Songs. To quote Edwin Dargan: "Love is evil — but Balkis is beautiful. Man is made for learning — but Balkis is on the horizon, too, and with her comes trouble. Finally, the new star brings complete catharsis" (438).

Because Tournier's protagonist is just as ashamed of his blackness as France's Balthasar, the same religious-idolatrous notions underlie his love for Biltine. Thus, Gaspard uses incense during his encounters with Biltine: "C'est alors que les fumées de I'encens donnèrent à nos bouffonneries un air de danse macabre. Le négre blanchi et la blonde noircie se faisaient face, tandis que le troisième larron, devenu clergeon d'un culte grotesque, balançait gravement à leurs pieds un encensoir fumant" (1980: 29; cf. Roberts 116). The term "culte grotesque" indicates the vantage point of Gaspard *after* the Bethlehem experience, i.e., the protagonist's enlightened I-now condemns the religious aspects of his I-then's obsession with Biltine as a profanation. Therefore, as in France's story, the blond Biltine and the star of Bethlehem are equivalents, which is suggested by the star's shape: a comet with a blond tail (cf. Roberts 108). Gaspard's misguided religious impulse is finally "corrected" when the star of Bethlehem helps him to transfer his worship to the only being worthy of veneration: Jesus Christ. To quote Susan Petit: "Gaspard also realizes that he has been seeking a divine love, so when he finds it at Bethlehem, he gives to the Infant what remains of the incense he and Biltine used as part of their sexual practices" (1991: 128).

In spite of these similarities, France's use of the Song of Songs to contrast human love with divine love is different in purpose from Tournier's exploration of this theme. One can read *Balthasar* as a straightforward meditation on a major religious issue. Murray Sachs, on the other hand, sees France's tale as a satire whose serious pseudo-biblical subject-matter is undermined by the plot: "The style is a pastiche of biblical tone, satirically intended, for there is a constant comic interplay in the story between the solemnity of the language and the triviality of the action being recounted" (40-41). However, whatever France's motivation for writing this story, he did not share Tournier's preoccupation with sexual and racial difference and identity. Although the issue of race launches *Balthasar* and constitutes its thematic nucleus, in the end France does not really deal with the question of blackness as a liability. The

conjunction "mais" from the black-white opposition in Song of Songs 1:5 remains a part of Balthasar's identity even when he does grasp the profound meaning of love with the help of the star. Upon meeting the other magi, he says nothing about his blackness: "J'ai vaincu ma luxure, c'est pourquoi l'étoile m'a parlé" (600). Therefore, even though Balthasar has found Christ, he is still "*noir, **mais** beau de visage*" (587 my emphasis).

Tournier, on the other hand, uses the opening of France's story and its link with Song of Songs 1:5 to challenge the conjunction *mais.* Therefore, Gaspard not only discovers the supreme kind of love in Christ, but he also redeems his blackness by discovering that the baby Jesus is black! This makes the implications of the meeting among the magi at the end of France's story fundamentally different from the message suggested by the same meeting in Tournier. When he encounters the other magi, Tournier's Gaspard says: "L'enfant de la Crèche devenu noir pour mieux accueillir Gaspard, le roi mage africain. Il y a la plus que dans tous les contes d'amour que je sache. Cette image exemplaire nous recommande de nous faire *semblable* à ceux que nous aimons." (1980: 220; my italics). The implication is that ""*Nigra sum **sed** formosa"* has been revised: *Nigra sum **et** formosa* (cf. David Gascoigne 83 and William Cloonan 368).

The requirement to make one "semblable" to the object of one's love suggests another typically Tournierian preoccupation that hides behind the traditional Christian message: the movement away from difference and toward sameness. As Mairi Maclean points out, "Tournier presents the human couple as being governed by a binary polarity which in his view incapacitates it for equality and for plenitude. He makes it clear that the key to a higher domain, to a fuller, richer experience of life, lies in bursting out of narrow binary structures" (241). We see this notion epitomized in *Les Météores* where there is a hierarchy that places heterosexual love at the bottom, homosexual love higher up and twinness *(gémellité)* on top (cf. Petit, 1991: 26). The ultimate twinness is

embodied in the ultimate twin: Christ (cf. David Gascoigne 16). Thus, the failure of Gaspard's relationship with Biltine is the failure of that which is farthest away from true sameness. As Bethany Ladimer points out, Gaspard's and Biltine's "respective blackness and whiteness serve to emphasize the sexual difference between them" (Ladimer *86;* also cf. 78-9). Therefore, the ability to overcome race as difference leads to the capacity to overcome sex as difference, and Gaspard's discovery of true love in Christ is the discovery of the ultimate sameness. Although Tournier's black magus follows the same quest as that of France's king, and although both of these quests lead to a traditional Christian message, Tournier takes this quest and this message one step further and develops a second level of meaning completely foreign to France.

The last point of correspondence that I would like to raise in connection with Tournier's and France's respective texts has to do with the character who enables the protagonist to discover the star of Bethlehem. The black king in both stories has a court astrologer who directs the monarch's gaze toward the heavens and acts as a catalyst in the protagonist's metaphysical quest. In France the astrologer is called Sembobitis: "[Sembobitis] lui enseignait entre autres vérités utiles à connaître, que les étoiles sont fixées comme des clous dans la voûte du ciel et qu'il y a cinq planètes, savoir: Bel, Mérodach et Nébo, qui sont mâles; Sin et Mylitta, qui sont femelles" (France 596). Having acquired the habit of observing the sky under Sembobitis's guidance, Balthasar sees the star of Bethlehem: "Il n'y a de vrai que ce qui est divin et le divin nous est caché. Nous cherchons vainement la vérité. Pourtant voici que j'ai découvert une étoile nouvelle dans le ciel. Elle est belle, elle semble vivante et, quand elle scintille, on dirait un œil celeste qui cligne avec douceur" (597). However, Sembobitis does not see this star because his wisdom has its limits, as he himself admits: "Seigneur, la science est infaillible; mais les savants se trompent toujours" (597). Barka May, the astrologer in Tournier, is equally modest and reserved, but he sees more than Sembobitis: "Je ne sais presque

rien, Seigneur [...I mais ce rien, je ne dois pas te le cacher. Un voyageur venu des sources du Nil nous annonce une comète" (Tournier 1980: 9-10)

Thus, a basic difference emerges in the relationship between the astrologer and the king in the two texts. Tournier's astrologer is more insightful than France's and not only discovers the star but also tells Gaspard to follow it: "En vérité, Seigneur Gaspard, cette femme occupe excessivement ta pensée! Eh bien, regarde la comète blonde maintenant. Elle approche, elle danse au ciel noir, comme une almée de lumiere. [...] Suis-la. Pars! Le voyage est un remède souverain contre le mal qui te ronge" (1980: 34). In the case of France's Balthasar, the impetus for travel follows the same logic, i.e., the astrological realm is also used to displace the woman in the king's life: "Pendent que j'étudie l'astronomie, je ne pense ni à Balkis, ni à quoi que ce soit au monde" (596). However, it is Balthasar who does all the thinking after being pointed in the heavenly direction by his astrologer and comes up with the idea of following the star (599). Thus, although by the end of his quest Tournier's Gaspard seems to acquire more profound insight through the discovery of divine love, France's Balthasar shows a greater degree of spirituality *before* the quest in that he launches the trip to Bethlehem himself.

Sister-Wife

Although the story-lines of Tournier's and France's respective stories are very similar, one major element is significantly different: the way the relationship between the black magus and the white woman ends. In its broadest outline, even this is similar: the king finds out that there is a white male in the life of his mistress and is cast out of the triangle. Thus, in *Balthasar* the hero discovers that Balkis is now interested in another monarch: the king of Comagène (594). In Tournier a similar discovery is made by Gaspard with respect to Biltine (see below). However, the details of this episode in *Gaspar,*

roi de Méroé give an ingenious twist to an otherwise banal situation, and this twist does not come from France's story.

As Lorna Milne has amply demonstrated in her book (1993), and as others have repeatedly pointed out, a key source for Tournier's metaphysics is the Old Testament (cf. Michael Worton, 199570). And of all the books in the Old Testament, Genesis appears to have attracted most of Tournier's attention. One particular incident in Genesis is difficult to overlook for any attentive reader who frequently comes back to the first book of the Pentateuch. A patriarch finds himself at the court of a foreign monarch. The patriarch's wife is attractive, and he fears that he might be killed by those who covet her. So he passes her off as his sister. The monarch does indeed covet the wife, and the patriarch is saved since he is not perceived as the competition. This story is so conspicuous because it is told in no fewer than *three* versions in close succession. In the first version the Patriarch is Abraham (Abram), the wife is Sarah (Sarai) and the monarch is the Egyptian Pharaoh: "And when Pharaoh's officials saw [Sarah], they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace" (Genesis 12:15). In the second version, Abraham and Sarah arrive at the court of Abimelech in Gerar where the same sister-wife hoax is acted out again with similar consequences (Genesis 20). In the third version the monarch is once again Abimelech of Gerar, but the patriarch is Isaac who passes off Rebekah as his sister: "When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, 'She is really your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?' Isaac answered him, 'Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her' " (Genesis 26:8-9).[3]

In Tournier's *Gaspard, roi de Méroé* we find all the key elements of the sister-wife hoax from Genesis. Galeka, a Phoenician notable, and Biltine, his wife, find themselves at the court of a foreign monarch: Gaspard, the king of Meroe. The spouses pretend to be sister and brother for the same reasons as those which

motivate the trickery of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis. This is made clear by Gaspard's reaction to the discovery of the hoax: "En faisant passer son amant - ou son mari - pour son frère, la Phénicienne le mettait à l'abri de ma jalousie, et lui faisait partager les faveurs dont je la comblais" (1980: 31). These "faveurs" are reminiscent of the way Abraham is treated by the foreign king: "He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels" (Genesis 12: 16). The discovery of the hoax by Gaspard recalls the same event in the story about Isaac and Abimelech at Gerar. Just as Abimelech actually sees Isaac and Rebekah in amorous pursuits (see above), Gaspard also finds out the truth when he catches Galeka and Biltine in each other's arms: "La suite eut la rapidité sans poids d'un cauchemar. Les amants surpris dans les bras l'un de l'autre, les soldats appelés, le garçon trainé vers les cachots de l'ergastule" (1980: 31).

In Genesis the Pharaoh, upon discovering the hoax, says the following to Abraham: "What have you done to me? [...] Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife?" (12: 18-19). In Tournier, too, Gaspard *takes* Biltine in the same manner before the revelation of the hoax (1980: 26). Thus, the king in Genesis 12 and in Tournier acts upon the mistaken assumption that the newcomer to his harem has a *legitimate* place in his bed (cf. von Rad 230). The perceived legitimacy of the king's action has to do with the royal sexual prerogative of antiquity, and it is used by Tournier as a means of exploring the question of personal attachment. Through the spiritual quest that follows the sister-wife hoax, Gaspard covers the distance that separates the biblical monarch from our own value system. The result is a reassessment of the relationship between love and power, whereby Gaspard learns that love is not possession but communication: "Un amour d'adoration est *toujours* partagé parce que sa force de rayonnement le rend irrésistiblernent communicatif" (1980: 219). This is why he lets Biltine and Galeka go as soon as he returns from Bethlehem.

The question of emotional attachment also constitutes the difference between the reasons for the king's dismay at the discovery of the sister-wife hoax in Genesis and in Tournier. Just like the king in all three Genesis versions, Gaspard is clearly devastated by the discovery of Biltine and Galeka in bed: "Je me suis retrouvé dans une solitude effrayante, au cœur d'une nuit aussi noire que ma peau et le fond de mon âme. Et j'aurais pleuré sans doute, si je n'avais su combien les larmes conviennent mal à un nègre" (1980: 31). However, the king in Genesis is concerned only with legality, morality and propriety. His fear is that he will be punished by the god of the patriarch for an act considered unacceptable in ancient Near Eastern society (Clifford and Murphy 23-24; 29). There is no question of amorous attachment to the sister-wife on the king's part. Gaspard, on the other hand, is stunned by the discovery that Biltine *does not love him.* This shifts the focus of the king's reaction from a legal, moral and religious plane to an emotional one. While the Genesis story makes a theological point about the way God protects His people in any situation (von Rad 169),[4] the sister-wife hoax in *Gaspard, roi de Méroé* constitutes a meditation on the incompatibility of love and enslavement. Therefore, although the king in Genesis and in Tournier releases the tricky couple, Gaspard's motivation for this act is fundamentally different from that which moves the Pharaoh and Abimelech.

Conclusion

The arguments presented above suggest that the sister-wife hoax in Tournier is another instance of possible (unmarked) hypertextuality. Having arrived at this pole of the hypertextual continuum, we must cite Genette's objection to this kind of analysis: "Je ne tiens pas à épouser l'herméneutique hypertextuelle. J'envisage la relation entre le texte et son lecteur d'une manière plus socialisée, plus ouvertement contractuelle" (16). However, the presence of unmarked borrowing in Tournier is not without precedent. It has been pointed

out that in *Le Roi des Aulnes* there is a scene that closely resembles an episode from Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meulnes.* In response to this, Tournier reacted in the following half-serious manner:

> Je réponds que cet épisode m'appartient plus justement qu'à Alain-Fournier, parce qu'il n'a dans *Le Grand Meaulnes* qu'un caractère épisodique et comme anecdotique, alors que dans *Le Roi des Aulnes,* il préfigure toute la suite, relevant bien évidemment de cette "phorie" qui constitue le seul sujet du roman. Il me semble que la priorité dans le temps d'Alain-Fournier ne tient pas en face d'une priorité thematique aussi fortement fondée, et que si l'un des deux, Fournier ou Tournier, devait être taxé de plagiat, c'est Fournier qu'il faudrait en toute justice condamner; (1977: 53; also cf. Susan Petit, 1995: 249)

Therefore, given the author's own admission of undeclared borrowing and his justification of the practice, it is reasonable to rehabilitate transtextual hermeneutics with respect to Tournier in spite of Genette's distaste for such an approach.

This is all the more applicable to *Gaspard, Melchior et Bulthazar* because this novel constitutes a particularly rich transtextual (Genette 7) hunting ground in Tournier's writing. What I have considered in this essay can be supplemented, for example, with William Cloonan's discussion on connections with Flaubert: "Les analogies entre *Salammb6* et *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar* sautent aux yeux" (367). And, as Michael Worton says, "depuis *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar,* le projet romanesque de Tournier est essentiellement parabolique dans la mesure où les textes récents affichent leur opacité narrative afin de se présenter comme des textes à relire, *comme des textes déjà lus"* (242; my italics). There is no question that rereading is something that Tournier does more than most authors. His rereading, when transformed into rewriting, inevitably leads to what Genette calls *transvalorisation,* i.e., a shift in sociocultural and moral values from the hypotext to the hypertext (418-24). In *Gaspard, roi de Méroé,* this shift involves the re-evaluation of love and race as ethical and philosophical concepts. Thus, as with what Michel Tournier does to

the above-mentioned episode borrowed from Alain-Fournier, Anatole France's treatment of Song of Songs 1:5 turns into something far more profound under Tournier's transtextual gaze. And so, the movement from Matthew to Anatole France to Michel Tournier and from Genesis to Tournier represents an attempt to work out the relationship between love, human dignity and faith in the context of the late twentieth century.

NOTES

2. The choice of the Queen of Sheba, as the magus's mistress, is an interesting one, since, according to Raymond Brown, tradition turned the Magi into kings by reference to Matthew's "implicit citation of Ps 72:10-11: 'May the kings of Sheba and Saba bring gifts, may all kings pay him homage' " (198).

3. There are two reasons for this rather striking redundancy. Modern biblical scholarship adheres to what is known as the Documentary Hypothesis, i.e., the notion that the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) is a composite of four separate documents. These documents, written at different times and by individuals pursuing different political and ideological goals, are known as J, E, P and D. Gerhard von Rad, for example, argues that J wrote c. 950 B.C.E., the E author wrote one or two centuries later and P wrote after the exile of the Israelites in Babylon c. 538-450 BCE (von Rad, 25; for a different dating cf. Richard E. Friedman 87, 210). Because these authors were taking much of their subject-matter from the same stock of Israelite traditions, known as G for *Grundlage,* doublets, such as the sister-wife incident, are common in the Pentateuch (Martin Noth 39). Thus, the story of Abraham in Egypt and the adventures of Isaac in Gerar come from the pen of J, while the story of Abraham in Gerar belongs to E (Richard J. Clifford and Roland E. Murphy 20, 23, 28). This accounts for the J-E doublets. As for the doublet within J (Abraham and Isaac), this is attributable to the fact that "repetition of similar events are *[sic]* not unusual in ancient Oriental literature" (Clifford and Murphy 20). It is noteworthy that Tournier is aware of the Documentary Hypothesis (Worton, 1995: 72).

4. As von Rad puts it, "Yahweh does not allow his work to miscarry right from the start; he rescues it and preserves it beyond all human failure" (169).

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