

The first white men*

Georges Baudoux†

TRANSLATED BY *Daryl Morini*‡

I

‘That old Tchiao’ (1919)

Tchiao is a really old Kanak from the village of Bouaganda, right near the big tribe in Gomen. You know the one, that little cluster of pointed huts lying hidden in a bouquet of dark trees and tall pine trees, straight as spears. The little hamlet is seen from afar. It’s as isolated as an island in the grassy, blond foothills that prop up the great peak at Kaala. It’s plopped there at the foot of a wall of slender stones jutting up like needles, which always seems about to collapse onto, and flatten, the village. But it stays there, and the Kanaks aren’t scared; moreover, the sorcerers, they who know much, said there was nothing to fear from it. And when it was said by sorcerers, that was that.

* These are the first known complete English translations of *Ce vieux Tchiao* (‘That old Tchiao’, 1919) and *L’Épouvante* (‘A horror story’, 1939). These stories were republished in the collection: Georges Baudoux, *Légendes Canaques II: Ils Avaient vu des Hommes Blancs* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1952). This work is in the public domain.

† Georges Baudoux (1870-1949), a.k.a. Thiosse, was the first New Caledonian writer. He worked as a cobalt and nickel miner on the main island’s northwest, where he collected oral history. He lived in Nouméa, Koumac, Koné.

‡ Daryl Morini is the editor of *Synkrêtic* and a researcher and translator of Russian philosophy. He holds a PhD in International Relations from the University of Queensland. He is based in Canberra, Australia.

It's pretty when you're there, in Bouaganda. Far, far off in the distance you can see the sea and a white line made of frothing waves colliding against big reefs. One sees Devert island, where turtles and birds lay their eggs, and the Bay of Téoudié, where many fish dance their *pilou*.¹ And below, the Gomen plains, which stretch out their mats of every green and yellow hue beneath the sun. One constantly hears the water falling from Kaala mountain, thundering in the valleys deep.

Tchiao is so old a Kanak that he has no age, he's far too old for it. He walks as if his back had snapped in half, and he's thin, so thin. He's made of bones and nerves stretched as tight as rope made of *taoura*;² he's just a living skeleton covered in black skin, dried and cracked, all crease and wrinkle. His shaven skull gleams like a dry coconut, he's lost all but a few hairs scattered about his head, in his ears too. His beard, clumpy and yellow, is of a kind rarely seen. The sun dazzles his bleary eyes, so he shuts them. To walk, he leans with both hands on a long stick. Being a bit fussy, as Tchiao is, he doesn't want to talk to anyone and always mutters to himself.

But Tchiao has a story. He saw many things and knew the time of the heroes, but his memories get all scrambled, so when he tells them he makes mistakes. He no longer knows. When the first white men, albinos from another island, came to Gomen, he was there, Tchiao was, in all his adult power and his martial glory. He didn't slay them, these first white men; he knew the delicate taste of human meat, which he often ate.³ But now, when asked if he ate white man,⁴ he denies it and clicks his old red tongue which is ever wiggling at the back of his always half-opened mouth.

When he was young, Tchiao was a man open to progress.⁵ He knew, thanks to the Pouébo Kanaks, that the whites would bring many useful things, and that killing them was unwise. In exchange for yams and *ouaré*,⁶ the white men offered pickaxes to replace the poles used to till the soil. As well as iron axes that were better for cutting serpentine rock and that never chipped.⁷ He had seen the whites come to cut sandalwood with their quick axes; he, Tchiao, had been overawed. To gain one, he had had to give the white men two of his own stone axes which the ancestors had bequeathed him.

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He had tasted, too, the white man's yams, which tasted nicer than Kanak yams. They were more subtle and didn't stick to the roof of your mouth. But the whites always sliced their yams and only gave away the offcuts. But he, Tchiao, wanted a whole one to himself.

One day, Tchiao saw the white man's great *pirogues*,⁸ with its two masts and many sails. The *pirogues* cast anchor in Youanga Bay. Tchiao grabbed two coconut-palm baskets, filled them with yams, and placed them on the back of his wife, who meekly followed.

He came to the seashore, opposite the ship, and sat on the beach, waiting until the white men wished to come ashore.

Kanak *pirogues* lay in the creeks and mangroves, one of which he could have taken to board, but this would have been ill-advised. If he'd gotten onto the ship, the whites would have killed him for meat. This was obvious.

Being obdurate and patient like his people, he waited the whole day for a tender boat to approach the shore. To distract himself, he fished for crabs and fish. At night, when the sun sank in the sea, he camped out a little further with his wife, both well concealed, so the whites wouldn't kill them in their sleep.

The next day, a tender peeled away from the schooner and came ashore. Tchiao went in, the water up to his thighs, the better to show himself while his wife fled, squatting low like a sultana bird,⁹ to hole up in the long grass.

The closer the tender came, the more steps back Tchiao took to stay a healthy distance away from the white men. These white men were strong out here, on the waves and ashore, so one had to be cautious. And while there were many whites, he, Tchiao, was by himself. If they attacked him, he could only rely on his legs to get away.

He parlayed with the white men who came ashore, making signs, always at a distance, which was enough to make himself understood. Tchiao dropped on the sand his two baskets full of yams, and the white men lobbed one his way that he caught mid-flight. With the deal done, Tchiao left to meet his wife, who was waiting for him on the ground, curled up in the straw.

Tchiao's life changed from this day on, acquiring a quite mysterious aura in other Kanaks' eyes. He'd leave early with the morning sun, without saying where, and would never bring anything back.

At times, he'd climb a peak, always the same one, carrying a basket containing his own assortment of herbs. From the ground, he'd be seen gesticulating in ways foreign to all the Kanaks: he was engaging in devilry and magic. But this made no sense, for Tchiao wasn't a sorcerer, he wasn't, but he was becoming one. All Kanaks, including women and children,¹⁰ started to fear him.

It was worrying enough that the sorcerers met as a Council, in which they decided that Tchiao's designs had to be investigated. What kind of calamities was he calling upon the tribe? What kind of unknown devil¹¹ did he speak to? Whose death was he plotting? To stave off his evil spells, perhaps it was time that Tchiao be killed.

All the tribe's sorcerers watched him, taking note of his coming and going, and of his gestures. They also studied the herbs Tchiao was using. He was always seen leaving his bouquet of herbs behind on the cliff, and latching onto a perch that was jammed in the earth. Tchiao had noticed he was being watched, so he would vary his departure times, changing the paths he took, resorting to trickery. Since Tchiao had become a special kind of sorcerer, the sorcerers grew scared of him and wavered in their murderous intent. Once he had been killed, he'd come back all horrible at night, when it was dark.

This witchcraft of his, which they were getting used to, had gone on for a few moons when a chance event helped the actual sorcerers discover the curses that dreaded Tchiao was practising.

He was in a little clearing of the forest, running in circles between a dozen yam poles planted upright; he held the herbs in his hands, dangling them about; at times he fell on all fours, and he brought his lips close to the soil, from where he spoke to it. Tchiao wanted to spoil the yam harvest, there was no longer any doubt about it.

The next day, the great Chief of Gomen sent his guards to detain the evil Tchiao. The great Council of sorcerers was gathered when he arrived. The executioner hung around, awaiting orders.

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The Chief accused Tchiao of having cast a spell on the yams, to kill off all the tribe's yams.

Tchiao defended himself bravely: 'No! That's not true. Those are the white man's yams that I planted, since here only I can make them grow. I call the rain to come. I ask the dead who know how to make yams grow¹² to help me grow the white man's yam at night.'

His defence speech was strong, but it was time for the evidence. The whole august Counsel, executioners in their wake, travelled over to the forest clearing. Tchiao pointed out the base of a perch, which was searched, and bits of peelings from the white man's yams were found.

Tchiao had planted a whole bread, but thankfully for him there was some crust left over. The other perches had been planted as deception measures.

In a secret gathering, the Council of sorcerers came to the following conclusion: 'The white man's yams grow only in the white man's soil; they can't grow in the black man's soil.'

But now, Tchiao is old, oh so old, and young Kanaks who work for white men, who wear shorts and drink rum,¹³ only mock him, saying: 'Ah, that old Tchiao is so mad. He, old Tchiao, wanted to make the white Kanak's¹⁴ yams grow so the whole tribe could have a big feast.¹⁵ He failed because the other Kanaks did him in.' Intuitively, old man Tchiao knows something has gone awry in nature's course.

And since he's a bit hard of hearing, when he sees white men or Kanaks look at him smiling, he still believes they're talking about the bread. And old Tchiao pouts his lower lip and clicks his tongue, and he walks off leaning on his walking stick, a symbol of the fading past.

II

'A horror story' (1939)

Come nightfall, the tropical sky brimming with starry millions hums in imposing silence. Abolishing all sense of perspective, a dark mass

of mountains rises sharply, as does the wall that holds the sea at bay.¹⁶ Near the coast, confused among trees, a brown boat's up-turned image is reflected deep in the sea. Along its shore, against which waves crash gently, a little fire is lit. The trembling flames light up the underside of branches, move the shadows, and fashion a high ceiling out of the canopies.

Next to the intimate fire, a microcosmic speck in the vast outer world, two people talk gravely about a physiological question which a Kanak legend linked to this place has raised.

During their conversation, the coconut tree's long and bendy fronds rattle from the wind's passing caress. High up in the valley, a waterfall overwhelms the silence by crashing, droning, and whispering through the rocks. It tends to stop, then start again. The waterfall, its pitch modulated by the changing breeze, at times echoes the deep, murmuring voices of the spirits and ghosts that lurk in the gullies. Yes, this waterfall does speak, repeating the cryptic words of the ancestors, who never die.

Though now overrun by weeds whose roots cover every inch, one may find many horticultural ridges, round foundations for huts, and the stones of fireplaces in this area, signs of a time when a major Kanak town existed in this pleasant bay.

This tribe of fishermen who lacked for nothing, what became of them? Nobody knows. Nobody can say. Facing the threat of white men on great *pirogues* that could shoot lightning, and feeling squeezed between sea and mountain, they had had to scatter, had to join other tribes that had more free space, that were more determined to be independent.

The ancestral stories alone had escaped oblivion to remain tied to the missing tribe's land. In the silence of the night, when contented nature is most garrulous, these stories re-awaken a whole past that has been asleep for centuries.

The attractive Tili, who is near the fire, her midriff bare, with a fringe belt around her hips, has a good posture, her skin cast a brassy red colour, with a well-proportioned body.

Her hair is styled in a big, undulating ball that covers her eyes and hangs on her shoulders. She looks Polynesian but is said to be the

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daughter of a sandalwood trader, one of those colonial settlers who, once upon a time, had dreamed up the euphemism “breaking wood”¹⁷ and left behind living proof of this work.

Although raised in a Kanak tribe, Tili possesses mental faculties greatly above those of ordinary tribeswomen; at any rate, the young white man who befriended her is under this illusion, which makes his life better.

In the daytime, in broad daylight, Tili’s life is all smiles. She finds joy in all things and in nothing at all. She sees it in the alarmed bird fluttering after an insect. In the fish which leaps high in the air and lands on the water with a slap. In the little crab that flees with its pincers all frenzied, knitting its legs about, and sinks into its hole. These are the memorable events that only entertain her, comparing them as she does to human gestures.

Nature gives her all the fineries she desires, and which she picks up in passing, on a whim. She makes a scarf out of a blossoming vine. Should a scared bird’s sudden flight leave a feather on the wind, she seizes it forthwith, sliding it behind her ear. She studs her hair with the scarlet flowers that she comes across. She wraps a small seashell that she finds around her wrist with plant fibres. This peace is not troubled by the thought that she may have to find something to eat. When the time comes, she knows nature will provide.

But at night, everything changes. When darkness warps the shape of all things and twists their outlines, making burnt niaouli trees¹⁸ look like ghosts standing still, and when slumberous nature’s whispers impress the mournful incantations of distant voices on one’s mind, Tili falls prey to the superstitions she inherited from her Melanesian ancestors, she loses her touching carelessness, the slightest unexplained noise disturbs her, and Tili feels very small.

The young European who became Tili’s partner after the last *pilon* tries his hardest to convince her that all these stories about revenants, ghosts, and devils, nefarious to varying degrees, are the product of the Kanaks’ anxious imaginations, and that these fables are of no consequences. And this conversation is still going.

Tili objects: ‘Of course you’d say that! Because you don’t know, you’ve never seen it. But the old Kanaks from long ago, they saw, and they knew.’

‘They were hallucinating, the elders, they saw devils everywhere. The elders before that, the ancestors, knew even less than today’s elders.’

Tili: ‘You don’t need the elders to know. Listen to the waterfall up there, at the end of the valley. Hear that? It’s not the water talking. Water can’t talk. When the voices stop and come back very faintly, that’s the devils talking about things from long ago.’

‘What do they look like, the mean devils that are always chattering? We never see them.’

‘Of course, we never see them. In the daytime they press into the forests of the mountain, but at night they come out and walk around, they observe how men and women live. If someone walks towards them, they hide in the bushes and the rocks. Although you don’t see them, they are there; you can hear leaves rustling. Often, they dive deep into the water, where they talk to eels. That’s when you can no longer hear them.’

‘And what can the devils possibly tell eels that is of any interest to them?’

‘That, I can’t say. That’s a Kanak thing. White people wouldn’t understand.’

‘You don’t want to say because you have no idea. You’re just kidding around. If you knew it, you’d tell me at once.’

‘No. The devils in waterfalls, that’s taboo. I can tell you about the other devils.’

‘Okay, then tell me a story about devils, one that everyone can be told. Go on, tell me!’

With an air of conviction, Tili began: ‘You know that from Paagoumène Point,¹⁹ the one you can see over there, you can hear devils do *pilou* dances in the mountain’s caves at night. As soon as it’s dark, the Kanaks no longer approach from this side. They stop before crossing the mountain pass, using the little path dug into the serpentine rock that goes down from Paagoumène Bay to Ohlande Bay. To throw off the devils, the Kanaks light fires along the sea-

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shore, then they sleep there, in the sand, till daybreak. If the Kanaks walked that path at night, when it's dark, the dead would come to kill them.'

Just as Tili spoke of the dangers that awaited the Kanaks at night, the dry branch of a nearby tree broke and, with a long *cr-a-a-ck*, fell to the earth with a heavy thud, unleashing a roaring sound that awoke the valleys' echoes.

Tili leapt to her feet at once and, with her eyes fixed on the source of the noise in the dark, she stood ready to leap into the water to make for the boat that might save her.

Her boyfriend gestured to stop her: 'Come on! Please don't. There's nothing to fear. That rotten branch was pulled down by its own weight. It had to fall sometime. Take a seat here. It's over. What are you afraid of?'

Still surveying the gloom from whence threats can emerge, Tili expressed her desire to go elsewhere immediately.

'See, I told you so!' she said. 'That branch didn't break by itself. Someone had to give it a push. A mountain devil did it. I know it. He followed the creeks²⁰ to the sea. That's where he heard my voice. He was listening and understood that I was talking about the devils that bring death to men. So, he got mad and broke a big branch to tell me to get away, that he'd hurt me if I stayed here.'

'Oh, come on, Tili, stop being ridiculous. None of that's possible, as you know full well. Just sit here quietly and let's not talk of this broken branch again. We're fine here, we have fire. Surely you don't expect us to pack up right now to go camp elsewhere?'

Feeling threatened by a danger only she can comprehend, Tili doesn't give up hope of leaving. She stands up and, with knees drawn tight, says in protest: 'Of course you fear nothing, you want to stay here. But me, I'm scared. Me, if I sit on this ground, that's it, I'll die.'

'What are you talking about? Dying! That's a stretch. No one wants to hurt you. And I'm here.'

'Yes, you're here, but you know nothing. You'll see nothing. It'll be too late when you see.'

‘Now, that’s better. At least explain yourself clearly. What danger are you facing? Tell me so I can protect you from it.’

With eyes still locked on the bush, across which shadows cast by the fire’s flickering flames swayed, Tili decided to explain a few things: ‘We’ve been here since morning. We walked around here, we picked up breadfruit.²¹ You, you’re happy. You swam in the waterfall’s deep swimming holes, and I watched you doing it. But I didn’t swim.’

‘Well, you didn’t swim because you didn’t feel like it. But that’s no reason to run off in the middle of the night.’

‘I didn’t swim because the elders made it taboo to do so way back. They knew things. They’d seen things. They placed the taboo. We have to listen to the elders.’

‘They placed a taboo on what, exactly?’

Tili hesitates, ums and ahs, and finally decides to lift a portion of the veil. Men can swim in the waterfall, but women can’t. It’s taboo. Some evil eels are found in there. Those eels are the same colour as the rocks. They can’t be seen.

‘So, what do they do, these evil eels?’

‘Ah! Well, there’s no use saying it. You know full well.’

‘Well, no. I know nothing. How am I meant to know, since you’re not saying anything specific. You always talk a lot, but don’t say much.’

Tili casts off the burden haunting her mind by sharing this secret:

‘You know that eels slither. They force their way into women, where they bite them and make them die.’

‘Right, now I understand. That’s awful. But if you don’t enter the water, then surely you have nothing to fear from these eels.’

‘Of course I do! There’s still plenty to fear. When devils order them to do so, the eels leave the water at night. They slither like snakes in the grass and, guided by scent, go to places where they’ll find sleeping women to hurt.’

Because, after hearing this explained, it would have been in poor taste and most ungrateful to force the virtuous Tili to spend all night standing next to the fire, deathly afraid, they both rolled up

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their mats and left to sleep at the bottom of their rowboat, away from the coast and far from the famished eels. And that's it.

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It would be idle to seek the genesis of this Kanak tale, which arose from unclear circumstances and was transformed into a supernatural tale under the influence of credulous imaginations and charismatic sorcerers. Let us only note that this drama's powerful sway extended over Ohlande Bay half a century ago,²² and that, since then, an invasive civilisation with no respect for taboos had upturned the domain of ancient tradition.

So it came to be that Paagoumène Bay—where once, beneath the shadeful banyan trees, lay storied, decomposing skeletons, brightly glistening jaws, and brachycephalous skulls²³ caught between mossy stones and tangled vines—was now dominated by the opulent house of a certain *Monsieur le Directeur* of a mining site.²⁴ The ancestors' bones had been swept away.²⁵

The narrow trail dug over centuries, the one which the Kanaks dared not cross by night, was now blocked off by corrugated iron buildings, in which the roar of engines and of anvils ringing under hammer blows could be heard. No, these are no longer the sounds of the past.

Meanwhile, on the other side beyond the mountain pass, in the small plain to which ghosts are exiled at night and which dampens the noise from the waves that crash against the reefs to the rhythm of an underground *pilon* dance, civilised men had lined up their graveyard's burial mounds in even rows. The mantra of superior races is always this: 'Move, you're in my place!'²⁶

In the spot called Paagougne, a little further in Ohlande Bay, near a beach whose shore is lined with seaweed and under coconut trees swaying in the wind, right in front of the waterfall haunted by misogynistic eels, a rural French settler farms pigs like some latter-day Eumaeus.²⁷ The world has ended.

Faced with these desecrations, there is no doubt that all the Kanak devils, little dwarves,²⁸ mysterious eels, and *toguis*²⁹ must have

holed themselves up in caves to give way to Greek hydras,³⁰ old satyrs,³¹ gnomes, and wood goblins³²—creatures which, by virtue of becoming official mythological entities, have now gained the right to live anywhere they like, including in the souls of the civilised.

Notes

I

‘That old Tchiao’ (1919)

- 1 P. 9: A *pilou* (or *pilou-pilou*), from the Nyelâyu language’s *pilu* meaning ‘to dance’, is a traditional Kanak ceremony. It tended to involve group dancing by night in a circular motion around a pole for hours.
- 2 P. 36: *Taoura*: a word, likely borrowed from Tahitian, for a thin rope made from plant fibres. *Te Reo*, Vol. 1-7 (1958): 5.
- 3 P. 37: Karin Speedy, a translator of and authority on Georges Baudoux, notes that ‘when we examine Boudoux’s stories today, we cannot help but notice when,’ as here, ‘he surrenders to the sensationalism of the colonial genre. Violent scenes of savagery and cannibalism, for instance, serve to justify the colonial project,’ using tropes of the Kanaks as animals, children, primitives, brutal, superstitious, at the bottom of civilisation’s ladder, etc. ‘Baudoux’s *Légendes Canaques* are steeped in racist discourses,’ as Speedy writes. But she notes that their paradoxical nature makes them relevant reading today. There is a dualism in his works, a surprisingly critical depiction of colonisation’s ‘metaphoric cannibalism’ of Kanak society. ‘Here we have the sublime ambiguity of Baudoux—for, if the black world is savage, frightening and brutal the “civilised” white world is no less cruel and inhumane.’ See Karin Speedy, ‘Critical Introduction, Georges Baudoux, *Jean M’Barai, the Trepang Fisherman* (Sydney: UTS ePRESS, 2007), 26, 40.
- 4 P. 37: ‘if he ate white man’ (*s’il a caïcayé du tayo blanc*) contains two Kanak pidgin words now absorbed into New Caledonian French. *Caïcayer* is a francised verb of the Pidgin (*kakae* in Bislama) loan word *caïcai*, ‘to eat’, ‘meal’, ‘feast’. *Tayo* is a Polynesian word which, instead of ‘friend’, means ‘Kanak man’ locally. Speedy, in *Jean M’Barai*, 23.
- 5 P. 37: See note 3 for context on the depiction of Tchiao as ‘a man open to progress’ (*l’esprit ouvert au progrès*).
- 6 P. 37: *Onaré* is the lesser yam (*Dioscorea esculenta*). Some suggest it was a sweet, served with sugar cane and bananas.
- 7 P. 37: ‘Iron axes’ (*tamioc en fer*): A *tamioc*, which may be derived from ‘tomahawk’, is a stone hatchet and weapon.

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- 8 P. 9: *Pirogue* is the French word for Kanak sailboats made from timber canoes, stabilised either using an outrigger or in some cases a second hull connected by a deck, and with one or two triangle-shaped sails like the modern sloop.
- 9 P. 39: The sultana bird (*poule sultane*) is the western swampen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*), a chicken-sized wetland bird.
- 10 P. 40: Children (*pikimini*) is a term for ‘Kanak children’, as Baudoux explains in a footnote.
- 11 P. 40: Devils (*togui*) is a term for ‘devils and evil spirits’, as Baudoux explains in a footnote.
- 12 P. 42: In Melanesia, garden magic rituals, chants, spells are conducted to protect a yam harvest and help it grow.
- 13 P. 43: ‘drink rum’ (*boivent du tafia*) is a reference to a local term for rum, *tafia*, used in other French colonies. The historian Frédéric Angleviel writes that ‘*tafia* spread to the mainland with the establishment of the penal colony,’ and that ‘the sale of alcohol to Melanesians was banned,’ as well as to prisoners as a form of punishment. See Frédéric Angleviel (ed.), *Histoire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie: Nouvelles approches, nouveaux objets* (Paris: Harmattan, 2005), 34.
- 14 P. 43: ‘the white Kanak’ (*le tayo blanc*), a play on the fact that *tayo* refers to a Kanak man. See note 4.
- 15 P. 43: ‘a big feast’ (*un grand caï-caï*). See note 4.

II

‘A horror story’ (1939)

- 16 P. 171: In the context of the nightfall that, the narrator tells us, warps an object’s perspective, ‘the wall that holds the sea at bay’ (*une muraille contenant la mer*) likely refers to the outer reef on the horizon.
- 17 P. 173: Some attribute to Kanak creole the now-defunct euphemism ‘breaking wood’ (*casser bois*) for coitus, but its use was also recorded on Vanuatu’s Ambrym Island. This suggests Baudoux was right that European traders at least spread this term. See Henri le Chartier, *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et les Nouvelles-Hébrides* (Paris, Jouvett et cie, 1885), 243.
- 18 P. 174: The paperbark or tea tree (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*), known locally as niaouli (from the Bélep language *yauli*), is endogenous to New Caledonia as well as to eastern Australia. It is omnipresent on the mainland’s west coast.
- 19 P. 177: Baudoux uses the outdated spelling Pagoumène, modernised in this version. Some sources spell the original local Kanak name as *Phwaaxuman*.
- 20 P. 178: ‘Creek’ (*le creek*) has been absorbed into New Caledonia French, probably from Australian English.
- 21 P. 179: ‘Breadfruit’ (*mayorés*) or *Artocarpus altilis* is an endogenous tree whose floury-textured fruit tastes sweet.

- 22 P. 180: 'half a century ago' implies that the story is set around 1889 and that the storyteller is telling it in 1939.
- 23 P. 182: 'brachycephalous' (lit. 'short-skulled') refers to the then-prevalent belief that Kanak heads were so shaped. Though it originated in medicine, where it is still used, the term's now-discredited use in anthropology in late 19th and early 20th century Europe was associated with the widespread racist, anti-Semitic, social Darwinist ideas of the time. The French eugenicist Georges Vacher de Lapouge, whose ideas influenced Hitler, theorised that the *Homo Alpinis* race was small, dark, brachycephalous, and lazy. The *Homo Europeaus* or Aryan race was superior, he wrote, because its members were tall, blond, energetic, intelligent, war-like, long-skulled (dolichocephalous), and rode bicycles. Nietzsche endorsed the idea that the 'inferior race' had 'brachycephalous features'. But other anthropologists at the time rejected Lapouge's classification, seeing brachycephalous heads as the true mark of superiority. Stuart K. Hayashi, *Hunting Down Social Darwinism: Will This Canard Go Extinct?* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015), 138; Mike Hawkins, 'Social Darwinism and Race', in *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Europe, 1789-1914*, ed. Stefan Berger (Main Street, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 231; Nietzsche, cited in Georges Chatterton-Hill, *The Philosophy of Nietzsche: An Exposition and an Appreciation* (New York: Haskell, 1971 [1914]), 197; Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 193 fn. 35, 194.
- 24 P. 182: *Monsieur le Directeur*, the polite French form of address for a director, refers to the manager of the mine in the area in Paagoumène Bay in the late 1930s. The bay was then part of the large chromium mine based in Tiébaghi, the largest in the world in 1941, at one time owned by BHP. It ceased operations in 1990. The bay in which the story is set was used to load the ships bound for Marseille and New York and was likely, as Baudoux suggests, the location of the executive director's home, at the time a *Monsieur le Directeur Administratif* A. Magnin. See 'La Tiébaghi à Paagoumène (Nouvelle-Calédonie): chrome', in *Entreprises Coloniales*, 21 January 2019, available at: < https://entreprises-coloniales.fr/pacifique/Tiebaghi_chrome.pdf>.
- 25 P. 182: At the time of writing, the land around Ohland Bay and Paagoumène Bay remains either under a mining cadastre that extends around the old Tiébaghi mining site or privately owned land. No tribe is officially registered in the area. This west coast region saw some of the most ferocious dispossessions of Kanak land in New Caledonia's history. In 1900, the Gomen chief committed suicide after his entire tribal domain was given to a settler. Some sources suggest that this event impacted Kanaks in Paagoumène as well. Jean Guiart, 'Naissance et avortement d'un messianisme', in *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, Issue 7 (January-June 1959): 7.
- 26 P. 182: 'Move, you're in my place!' (*Ôte-toi de là que je m'y mette*) is a French expression with a meaning related to the English 'possession is nine-tenths of the law', but with a sarcastic bite that is critical of this attitude.
- 27 P. 182: Eumaeus is a Greek mythological figure, swineherd, and friend to Odysseus in *The Odyssey*.

Synkrētīc

- 28 P. 183: ‘little dwarves’ (*káá-goume*), which Baudoux doesn’t define, appears to be the local term for the mystical, often malevolent dwarves of Kanak mythology, which are typically feared and called *nains* or *lutins* in French. In the Nêlêmwa-Nixumwak language, *kba-xuxum* means ‘all tiny, like a dwarf’ and *kbaa-yu* means ‘all small’. See Isabelle Bril and Soop Dahot, *Dictionnaire nêlêmwa-nixumwak-français-anglais* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 216.
- 29 P. 183: Some oral history supports Baudoux’s attribution of Kanak mythical-religious significance to this location. A story narrated by François Pumali in the nearby village of Pagou (*Néyamma*) on 25 September 1977 explains that, upon death, the Kanak soul enters the underworld at the same beach of Paagoumène (*Phwaaxuman*). It is there that the soul enters a cave occupied by a devil (or *toḡu*), down which it will travel to join the dead. See Maurice Coyaud and Denise Bernot, *Littérature orale: Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Paris : SELAF, 1979), 36.
- 30 P. 183: The *Hydra* is the Greek mythological serpent guarding the underworld, which Hercules kills in his labours.
- 31 P. 183: Translated as ‘old satyrs’ (*aux silures*), Baudoux is referring to Greek mythological creatures associated with Silenus, friend and tutor to the wine god Dionysus. *Sileni* were satyr-like creatures with horse’s tails rather than goat’s legs, and are sometimes synonyms for old satyrs. Greek art portrayed *sileni* as often lustful, usually drunk older men.
- 32 P. 183: ‘wood goblin’ (*sylvains*) are European mythical goblins or elves. In one account, they protect hazelnuts from naughty boys. Their name is derived from *Silvanus*, Roman god of the woods, from the Latin *silva* for ‘forest’. Sylvans were thought to exist well into the Middle Ages. Thomas Aquinas mentions them in his *Summa Theologica* and appears to accept their existence, assimilating them to a group of demons that persecute women.