

## **“Une phare pour quel port?”: The Dilemma of Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo, Colonized Poet**

**Emma Claire Everett**

### **Abstract:**

This essay examines five unpublished 1925 sonnets by Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo while challenging the prevailing view of the poet as formalist and politically disengaged. Through historical analysis, the paper demonstrates the pivotal moment in Rabearivelo's work that these poems represent, when French poetics and Malagasy nationalism converged to share the same sonnet form. Rather than solely marking Rabearivelo's stylistic shift, the manuscripts reveal his simultaneous developments in aesthetics and politics. While criticism has emphasized his reliance on conventionality and imitation of fin-de-siècle French symbolism, this study situates his writing within colonial Madagascar's sociopolitical landscape and highlights his clear connections to anti-colonialism. I reframe Rabearivelo's early work as an attempt to reconcile artistry with colonial subjugation, in turn confounding contemporary critical understandings of his writing and psychology. On a broader scale, this paper shows how politics must often take precedence over artistry for colonized writers, and, in turn, fundamentally shape their literary productions.

**Keywords:** Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo; colonial Madagascar; nationalism; sonnet; colonized writer