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After the Earthquake: Some Reflections on Recent Scholarship about Haiti

'In spite of its poverty, its political upheavals, its lack of resources, Haiti is not a peripheral place. Its history has made it a center.'
— Yanick Lahens[1]

In one of several recent review articles on the numerous publications that have appeared in the broad field of Haitian studies, the historian Matthew J. Smith commented: 'It is a peculiar feature of Haitian historiography that increased production of new literature often follows national crisis.'[2] Smith goes on to track the waves of (largely external) scholarly attention to which Haiti has been subject in recent years, noting the particular impact of triggers such as the overthrow of Jean-Claude Duvalier (1986), the (first) election of Aristide (1991), the bicentenary of Haitian independence (2004, coinciding with Aristide's second ousting), and most notably the earthquake of January 2010. The risk in such flurries and clusters of activity is—as Michael Dash underlined in a mordantly critical overview, published several years previously and provocatively entitled 'the (un)kindness of strangers'—that old assumptions tend to be recycled, areas to which significant attention has already been directed continue to dictate research agendas, and there is little or no evidence of what Gina Athena Ulysse has dubbed the urgently required 'new narratives' about Haiti.[3] The emergence of a substantial body of research on Haiti in the postcolonial field over the past decade has highlighted this dilemma: on the one hand, this work is to be welcomed as a challenge to the dominance of the field by certain national, regional or sub-continental paradigms, and as a recognition of the fact that postcolonialism may be seen to have been complicit in (or at best blind to) the 'silencing' and 'disavowal' of Haiti and its precocious postcoloniality; but on the other, it might be argued that such attention has contributed to yet another chapter in what Paul Farmer once called the 'uses of Haiti' as scholars have eschewed a collaborative or even decolonial form of engagement, and have (as Smith suggests in his article) been 'guided by a radical motivation' not necessarily grounded in a broad contextual knowledge of Haiti itself.[4]

Nick Nesbitt has nevertheless made a persuasive and pervasive argument for the enhanced recognition of Haiti in postcolonial studies, not least because, in his terms, the country provides in many ways an exceptional and premature instance of a situation that was at once postcolonial and neo-colonial—one and half centuries before these interlinked phenomena would become apparent elsewhere in the aftermath of World War II.[5] Moreover, Haiti reminds us of one of the key roles of Francophone postcolonial studies: i.e., to explore the specificity of the cultures, countries and entangled circumstances evident in the wake of historical French colonialism, while at the same time, through rigorous comparison with suitable examples from other cultures and traditions, underlining the many ways in which

[1] Yanick Lahens, 'Haiti, or the health of misery', in *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture and the Earthquake of 2010*, ed. by Martin Munro (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), pp. 9–11 (p. 11).
[2] Matthew J. Smith, 'Haiti from the Outside In: A Review of Recent Literature', *Radical History Review*, 115 (2013), 203–11 (p. 203).
[3] J. Michael Dash, 'The (un)kindness of strangers: writing Haiti in the 21st century', *Caribbean Studies*, 36.2 (2008), 171–78, and Gina Athena Ulysse, 'Why Haiti needs new narratives now more than ever', in *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti since the Earthquake*, ed. by Mark Schuller and Pablo Morales (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2012), pp. 240–44. Ulysse plans an expanded version of this piece in a volume entitled *Why Haiti Needs New Narratives* due to appear in the 'Onward!' series to be launched in Autumn 2013 to celebrate '25 years of intellectual engagement of the Haitian Studies Association and the *Journal of Haitian Studies*'.
[4] Smith, 'Haiti from the Outside In', p. 207.
[5] Nick Nesbitt, 'The Idea of 1804', *Yale French Studies*, 107 (2005), 6–38.

the cultural artefacts and historico-political precedents that emerge from such situations may be seen to have more general resonance relevant for present analysis. Reasserting the role of Haiti in discussion of the 'age of revolutions' has become a priority, allowing further recognition and development of the work of earlier scholars such as C.L.R. James; this approach has also encouraged the emergence of a more nuanced, multilingual vision of Black Atlantic history and culture; and at the same time, it has permitted reassessment of key tenets of French political culture. Recognition of the status of Haiti's often spectral presence in the political arena has again allowed re-engagement with earlier scholarship (in the work of pioneers such as Anna Julia Cooper), but has also encouraged, on the one hand, active 'postcolonialization' of our understandings of the French Revolution and its afterlives and, on the other, assertion of the importance of understanding the 'République' as 'métissée'.

It is two decades now since Maryse Condé called for the jettisoning of the 'conventional revolutionary bric à brac' associated with nineteenth-century Antillean history and culture.[6] Although her remarks were aimed specifically at the masculinist assumptions and emphases of much Caribbean culture (as well as of cultural analysis), the comment encapsulates a continued unease relating to the predominance of the Revolution (and—depending on the commentator—of a failure to deliver its full potential, or of the ways in which that potential is yet to be delivered) as a ready-made paradigm used to 'explain' Haiti. The causes of this anxiety are at least threefold. First, the privileging of the revolutionary period and the war of independence may be seen as over-deterministic, positing a teleological view of history that depends on a narrative of past (colonial) glory, of present (post-colonial) decline and of inevitable (continued) future failure; this is the manoeuvre that Michael Dash, in his reflections on 'the (un)kindness of strangers', detected as still evident in accounts of Haiti produced in the 1990s; it was also apparent in much of the external media coverage of the earthquake and its aftermath, most notably in the pronouncements of the US evangelist Pat Robertson, a phenomenon that inspired Ulysse's call for 'new narratives'. Second, the emphasis on the Revolution, an event that is itself seen as a blind spot in much North American and European historiography, may be seen as creating further lacunae within awareness of Haitian history itself—and, most notably, an inability to see other historical turning points, the feedback loops that disrupt teleological narratives and genuinely link historical moments, and the particular periods during which—as Smith suggests in *Red and Black in Haiti*, or Peter Hallward in *Damming the Flood*—alternatives were momentarily possible. Finally, stubbornly reading the upheavals of the present through the lens of the revolutionary past, i.e., seeing contemporary Haiti as the victim of its historical failings rather than as the product of a wider set of contemporary circumstances, deflects attention from the current implications of the vulnerability of fragile states in a globalized economy and subject to the precarious balance of power in the Americas.

In a recent article in this publication, Martin Munro suggested that the 2010 earthquake might at last loosen the hold of the Revolution, and provide an alternative point of reference for those writing from or about Haiti.[7] This notion of rupture—both critical and creative—is reflected in the title of a startlingly innovative novel published by Yanick Lahens shortly after the disaster, *Failles*. It is becoming evident that, although images of the Revolution may continue to haunt cultural production (perhaps not surprisingly given the persistence of revolutionary figures, from the designation of Haiti's principal airport, to the statuary around which a prominent tent city was constructed on the champ de Mars), the poetics and aesthetics of literary and artistic production certainly continue to evolve in new directions, as is evident in the work of a novelist such as Marvin Victor, or the knowing

[6] Maryse Condé, 'Order, Disorder, Freedom and the West Indian Writer', *Yale French Studies*, 83 (1993), 121–35 (p. 133).

[7] Martin Munro, 'Post-earthquake Haitian Writing', *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 2.2 (2011), 2–7.

installations of an artist such as Mario Benjamin.[8] In a collection of articles that appeared shortly after the earthquake, the Swedish economist Mats Lundahl developed the idea of alternative points of departure by including a chapter originally published in 1995 on 'five decisive events in the economic history of Haiti'. He outlined accordingly 'an interrelated series of historical phenomena which explain the country's current economic disaster'.[9] Although, given Lundahl's specialism, the emphasis here is on Haiti's economic plight, the implications of the piece are twofold: not only does the article relativize the importance of the Revolution (presented in economic terms as the destruction of plantation society and situated between first European contact and the land reforms of 1809), but it also implies that in this sequence the earthquake might constitute a sixth turning point in the quest for a post-predatory society.

My current reflections respond to such a suggestion by exploring the extent to which 2010 might similarly resonate seismically in scholarship on Haiti, suggesting that the emergence of 'new narratives' will permit fresh understandings of the past as well as a renewed focus on the present. The remainder of the piece explores a selection of some of the recent work that has emerged, following the earthquake, in Haitian studies and related areas. I suggest that this material provides (primarily English-language) readers with the means of understanding contemporary Haiti in its social, political and cultural complexity. Only a snapshot is provided, without any pretention to comprehensive coverage; since the emphasis is on external perspectives, I have not for instance considered in any detail the work produced under still difficult conditions in Haiti itself or in the numerous journal articles published since 2010. I conclude by underlining the continued engagement with historiography (and particularly revolutionary historiography). I have already alluded to the late Michel-Rolph Trouillot's famous description of a 'silencing' of Haiti, and to Sibylle Fischer's delineation of a similar process of 'disavowal', but the *phénomène d'édition* evident in a slew of publications on Haiti in recent years suggests that Celucien L. Joseph's thesis of a more general 'Haitian turn' across a range of fields may not be an exaggeration.[10] What remains to be seen is whether this new work represents a genuinely new departure, or whether it will perpetuate, albeit with different emphases, the processes to which Trouillot and Fischer referred.

It is important to note, in the light of Smith's comments on nodal points in Haitian scholarship, that a number of the outstanding books published in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake were the result of the flurry of research activity on Haiti in the previous decade. As a result of 12 January 2010, this work nevertheless acquired a greater visibility and a new immediacy. These studies included Kate Ramsey's outstanding study of the relationship between *Vodou* and the state, a challenge to external understandings of indigenous religion in the country, and a careful analysis of its history (including a seemingly unfinished cycle of repression and criminalization) across the two centuries since independence.[11] Ramsey's study is exemplary in that—like the work of Matthew Smith in *Red and Black in Haiti*—it casts light on periods of Haitian history to which, since the death of David Nicholls, non-Haitian scholars have paid only scant attention. *The Spirits and the Law* is particularly illuminating in its engagement with the nineteenth century, but it also considers, as does Smith's own work, the important presidencies of Sténio Vincent and Elie Lescot, too often eclipsed between the end of the US occupation and the rise of François

[8] On Benjamin, see Wendy Asquith, 'Expectations of Catastrophe: Mario Benjamin, Commissions, and Counter-Contexts', *Small Axe*, 42 (2013) (forthcoming).

[9] Mats Lundahl, 'Five decisive events in the economic history of Haiti', in *Poverty in Haiti: Essays on Underdevelopment and Post Disaster Prospects* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 3–18 (p. 3).

[10] Celucien L. Joseph, '"The Haitian Turn": An Appraisal of recent Literary and Historiographical Works on the Haitian Revolution', *Journal of Pan-African Studies*, 5 (2012), 37–55.

[11] Kate Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Duvalier. Other scholars whose work has appeared since 2010 have continued research on earlier periods, especially on pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue, as is evident in major studies such as Malick W. Ghachem's *The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution* and Sara E. Johnson's innovatively comparative work on transcolonial collaboration and resistance in the revolutionary Americas.[12] Other recent studies include a small but significant body of research into Haiti and the United States, casting into historiographic perspective current geopolitical debates by reminding readers of their prehistory, produced by scholars such as Millery Polyné, Ashli White and Matthew Clavin. Additional titles, including some forthcoming, suggest that this remains a fruitful area of enquiry, and one that could usefully be complemented by similar work on Haiti and France, as well as on Haiti and Great Britain.[13]

Other important studies have addressed literature and culture from new perspectives, prominent among which are Paul Miller's *Elusive Origins*, a comparative exploration of the implications of the Enlightenment for Caribbean authors through study of what its author calls 'the modern Caribbean historical imagination', and John Patrick Walsh's *Free and French in the Caribbean*, a long overdue consideration of the place of Haiti in the work of Aimé Césaire.[14] Visual arts have also attracted welcome attention, not least in the excellent catalogue produced to accompany the recent Nottingham Contemporary exhibition of Haitian art, and there has been a renewed interest in music, and especially in its links to *Vodou* that had already been the subject of important studies by Elizabeth McAlister and by Michael Largey.[15] Perhaps not surprisingly, there has also been a welcome focus on Haitian literature in the later twentieth and early twenty-first century, allowing increasing

[12] Malick Ghachem, *The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), and Sara E. Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 2012).

[13] Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Matthew Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); and Millery Polyné, *From Douglass to Duvalier: U.S. African Americans, Haiti, and Pan Americanism, 1870–1964* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2010). Also published shortly after the earthquake was *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. by Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York: Routledge, 2010). Forthcoming work includes Ronald Angelo Johnson, *Diplomacy in Black and White: John Adams, Toussaint Louverture, and their Atlantic World Alliance* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2014), and a more hemispheric perspective is adopted by the contributors to *Haiti and the Americas*, ed. by Carla Calargé, Raphael Dalleo, Luis Duno-Gottberg, and Clevis Headley (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2013). I attempted to begin exploration of the France–Haiti axis in my own 'Haiti and France: settling the debts of the past', included in *Politics and Power in Haiti*, ed. by Kate Quinn and Paul Sutton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 140–59. The volume also contains chapters by, among others, J. Michael Dash, Alex Dupuy and Patrick Sylvain. Alyssa Sepinwall approached the subject of France and Haiti from a historiographic angle in 'Atlantic Amnesia: French Historians, the Haitian Revolution and the 2004–6 CAPES Exam', in *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, 34 (2006), 300–14. Since David Geggus's *Slavery, War and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793–1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), there has, however, been little scrutiny of links between Haiti and Great Britain, although Jack Webb's current PhD project at the University of Liverpool, on 'The Spectre of Haiti in the British Imagination, 1791–2007', is beginning to address the topic.

[14] Paul B. Miller, *Elusive Origins: The Enlightenment in the Modern Caribbean Historical Imagination* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2010), and John Patrick Walsh, *Free and French in the Caribbean: Toussaint Louverture, Aimé Césaire, and Narratives of Loyal Opposition* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013). On Césaire and Haiti, see also Lilian Pestre de Almeida, *Aimé Césaire: une saison en Haïti* (Montreal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2010).

[15] See, for example, *Kafou: Haiti, Art and Vodou*, ed. by Alex Farquharson and Leah Gordon (Nottingham: Nottingham Contemporary, 2012), and Benjamin Hebblethwaite, *Vodou Songs in Haitian Creole and English* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2011). Among earlier studies of music, I am thinking of Largey's *Vodou Nation: Haitian Art, Music and Cultural Nationalism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), and McAlister's *Vodou, Power and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

recognition of emerging authors and the expansion of the contemporary canon beyond, among others, Edwidge Danticat and Dany Laferrière.[16]

As I have suggested, this work in many ways sustains the momentum of scholarship that emerged in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The earthquake also provided an opportunity for the republication of earlier writings, including books by journalists Elizabeth Abbott and by Bernard Diederich, the work of both of whom focused on the Duvalier regime and as a result lent itself to the often overhasty analysis of contemporary Haitian politics in the light of recent historical precedent.[17] Equally apparent, however, and perhaps more important for the purposes of the current piece, were publications triggered specifically by the earthquake, either reflecting on the meanings and implications of the disaster, or responding to a public appetite for more general material on Haiti. Although the immediate response to the earthquake was, not surprisingly, evident in journalism, in social media and in digital formats such as blogs, a number of books were also produced rapidly in its aftermath. Martin Munro gathered a remarkable assemblage of writers and Haiti specialists (including Raoul Peck, Yanick Lahens, Maryse Condé, Madison Smartt Bell and Michel Le Bris) for a volume that appeared in late 2010 entitled *Haiti Rising*. This is a collection that sought to provide a concise introduction to Haitian history, politics and culture while also incorporating eyewitness accounts by survivors of the earthquake and a series of other personal reflections. This collective and subjective approach is adopted in several other volumes, not least Paul Farmer's *Haiti after the Earthquake*, published in 2011, in which the global health and human rights activist (recently criticized for his uneasy proximity to official U.N. and US authorities in Haiti) describes the motivations for producing a polyphonic account drawing on multiple experiences of the earthquake: 'knowing that a quarter of a million voices were silenced on a single night and that more recent problems (such as cholera) are part of the same tragedy encourages us to offer these personal and place-specific narratives.'[18] The various voices describing the earthquake and its aftermath have now proliferated and become increasingly incisive. There is clear evidence of this tendency in the recent collection of narratives and observations gathered by Beverley Bell in *Fault Lines*, a volume whose subtitle—'views across Haiti's divide'—encapsulates the social fractures that have merely been accentuated by the earthquake.[19] This is a theme also picked up by expert external observers, most notably by Jonathan Katz, who has delineated the ways in which the impact of the disaster of 12 January 2010 has been exacerbated and not alleviated by the international relief effort, and by Amy Wilentz, who provides a 'letter from Haiti' in which she evokes the foreign presence in the country following the earthquake and the struggle of many Haitians to recover a semblance of everyday life despite and not thanks to this intervention.[20]

The distinctive journalism of Katz and Wilentz is complemented by a growing number of academic studies of the post-earthquake landscape. There has been considerable focus on what the economist Mats Lundhal has dubbed, in a new book, the 'political

[16] See, for example, an important study of the Spiralist movement by Kaiama L. Glover in *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010).

[17] Elizabeth Abbott, *Haiti: A Shattered Nation* (London: Overlook Duckworth, 2011); Bernard Diederich, *The Price of Blood: History of Repression and Rebellion in Haiti under Dr. François Duvalier, 1957–1961* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2011) and *The Murderers Among Us: History of Repression and Rebellion in Haiti under Dr. François Duvalier, 1962–1971* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2011).

[18] Paul Farmer, *Haiti After the Earthquake*, ed. by Abbey Gardner and Cassia Van Der Hoof Holstein (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), p. 4.

[19] Beverley Bell, *Fault Lines: Views Across Haiti's Divide* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

[20] Jonathan M. Katz, *The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and Amy Wilentz, *Farewell Fred Voodoo: A Letter from Haiti* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013).

economy of disaster',[21] and this is a theme developed in the eclectic contributions on everyday politics, culture and society gathered by Mark Schuller and Pablo Morales in *Tectonic Shifts*, one of the few collections to include a number of Haitian journalists, activists and scholars amongst its contributors.[22] The earthquake also highlighted the importance to contemporary Haiti of its diaspora, and this is a subject that has become of increasing interest in discussions of Haitian nationhood and culture, both in a specifically Caribbean context and in a wider global frame.[23] Inevitably, as the specific point of impact of 12 January 2010 recedes, and the implications of the earthquake for internal governance and external intervention become clear, there is the possibility of a broader range of disciplinary responses. These are evident, for instance, in the remarkable contributions to Millery Polyné's edited collection *The Idea Of Haiti*, a sophisticated and multidisciplinary analysis—often in historical perspective—of the politics and narratives of 'newness' in Haiti across a range of periods, and not restricted to the present.[24]

Polyné's introduction sets out a mini-manifesto for Haitian studies in the 'post-January 12 era', outlining the aims of the field, namely: 'to create new narratives that challenge enduring tropes of Haitian identity and affiliations; to recover and rethink local, national, and transnational histories and memories; and to highlight the creative activism, cultural production, and innovation emerging from Haitian peoples before and after the earthquake.'[25] Although this approach implies a different form of engagement with history than the one focused almost obsessively on the legacies of the Revolution outlined at the outset of this piece, the spectral presence of the past in the troubled present remains a key theme. Matthew Smith's own overview of recent scholarship concludes, for instance, with a reference to the 'relative indifference of the state and society' within Haiti to the return from exile and continued presence of two former presidents, Jean-Claude Duvalier and Jean-Bertrand Aristide.[26] He interprets this reaction as a deflection of attention away from 'crises of old', and as a refocusing on the 'incomprehensible tragedy of January 12, 2010'. Literary production suggests that there are some grounds for this observation, but the presence of Aristide and Duvalier also signals a persistence, albeit in often diffracted forms, of the past.

It is perhaps no surprise that the 'Haitian turn' described by Joseph incorporates a strong historiographic strand. A number of important historical studies have been published since 2010, including Jeremy Popkin's *You are all Free*, a microhistory of Cap-François in 1793 that seeks to challenge deterministic accounts of the Haitian Revolution, and present a rigorous contextual understanding of events.[27] Philippe Girard, whose earlier *Paradise Lost* was one of the triggers for Dash's accusations of the '(un)kindness of strangers', has continued to display a gift for detailed and often corrective archival research, not least in his

[21] Mats Lundhal, *The Political Economy of Disaster: Destitution, Plunder and Earthquake in Haiti* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[22] See also Schuller's *Killing with Kindness: Haiti, International Aid, and NGOs* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

[23] *Haiti and the Haitian Diaspora in the Wider Caribbean*, ed. by Philippe Zacaïr (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2010), and *Geographies of the Haitian Diaspora*, ed. by Regine O. Jackson (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

[24] *The Idea Of Haiti: Rethinking Crisis and Development*, ed. by Millery Polyné (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

[25] Polyné, 'To make visible and invisible epistemological order: Haiti, singularity and newness', in *The Idea Of Haiti*, pp. xi–xxxviii (p. xxxi).

[26] Smith, 'Haiti from the Outside In', p. 211.

[27] Jeremy Popkin, *You are all Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Popkin also published a useful brief history of the revolutionary period, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), complementing his 2007 Duke University Press anthology of first-hand narratives, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*.

recent comprehensive study of the Haitian war of independence (1801–04).[28] Also, Laurent Dubois has provided one of the first comprehensive English-language histories of post-revolutionary Haiti, and Alyssa Sepinwall has produced an extremely useful and user-friendly anthology of some of the key texts on Haitian historiography from the past three decades.[29] At the same time, we are seeing an indication of fresh directions in Haitian revolutionary scholarship, exemplified in many ways by Deborah Jenson's *Beyond the Slave Narrative*. Jenson's book is one of a number of studies published in the twenty-first century to identify a set of distinctive literary and political voices in post-independence Haiti.[30] Philippe Girard has indeed signalled the need for a new historiographical approach to Haiti—one that is, in his terms, no longer 'hampered by insufficient archival research, a parochial approach by US and French scholars, and linguistic fragmentation'.[31] Numerous source materials—available in manuscripts or otherwise long out of print—are being made available, whether these are texts by the revolutionary leaders, by eyewitnesses, or in subsequent representations of significant historical importance.[32] The 'new narratives' to which Gina Ulysse refers are beginning to emerge, grounded in a reappraisal and diversification of our awareness of the past, but also continuing to challenge, illuminate and enhance our understanding of Haiti now.

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[28] Philippe Girard, *Paradise Lost: Haiti's Tumultuous Journey from Pearl of the Caribbean to Third World Hot Spot* (New York: Palgrave, 2005) and *The Slaves Who Defeated Napoléon: Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian War of Independence* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, November 2011). Girard has also published a series of substantial articles, including 'Jean-Jacques Dessalines and the Atlantic System: A Reappraisal', *William & Mary Quarterly*, 69.3 (2012), 549–82; 'French atrocities during the Haitian War of Independence', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 15.2 (2013), 133–49; and (with Jean-Louis Donnadieu) 'Toussaint before Louverture: New Archival Findings on the Early Life of Toussaint Louverture', *William & Mary Quarterly*, 70.1 (2013), 41–78.

[29] Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012); and *Haitian History: New Perspectives*, ed. by Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall (New York and London: Routledge, 2013).

[30] Deborah Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).

[31] Philippe Girard, 'The Haitian Revolution, History's New Frontier: State of the Scholarship and Archival Sources', *Slavery and Abolition*, 34.1 (2013), 485–507 (p. 485).

[32] I am thinking of, among other recent publications, *Toussaint Louverture, Lettres à la France, 1794–1798: idées pour la libération du peuple noir d'Haïti*, ed. by Antonio Maria Baggio and Ricardo Augustin (Bruyères-le-Châtel: Nouvelle cité, 2011); *Mémoires du Général Toussaint Louverture*, ed. by Daniel Desormeaux (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011); Marcus Rainsford, *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti*, ed. by Paul Youngquist and Grégory Pierrot (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2013); and C.L.R. James, *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History: A Play in Three Acts*, ed. by Christian Høgsbjerg (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2013).

Postgraduate Work in Progress

Documentary Film, Postcolonial Memory and Imagination: Sebbar's Ekphrasis in *La Seine était rouge* (1999)

This article takes the fictional and ekphrastic rendering of a documentary film, featuring witness testimonies of the brutal police massacre of peacefully protesting Algerians on the night of 17 October 1961 in Paris, as a critical site for the analysis of postcolonial memories and identities in Leïla Sebbar's *La Seine était rouge* (1999). While Michael Rothberg's observation that the text is 'self-conscious' in its enquiry into issues of transmission, media and mediation is instructive, as existing scholarship has tended to undermine the essentially metatextual dimension to the novel,[33] I argue that one vital way in which Sebbar challenges the concept of pure and homogeneous identities, and objective national memories, is through the literary device of the described documentary film—part of the fictional narrative about a real historical event.

The novel inscribes various narratives onto existing Paris landmarks, and in so doing reveals urban space as palimpsestic, and memory and identity as inherently pluralistic and performative. A number of interrelated issues are thus explored in the text, including the presence, visibility and legibility of traces from the past in contemporary Paris; the representational interpenetration of memories of the Holocaust and the Algerian War of Independence in France;[34] the interconnections between familial, personal and domestic narratives, and larger national, international and historical narratives; transgenerational memory transmission; and the ways in which recollection is inescapably framed by, or rather is a product of, the present moment.

The character Louis is a documentary filmmaker and his film occupies a central and structuring place in the novel, as it becomes one of the primary vehicles through which Sebbar explores questions about recalling the past, imagining the past, transmission of testimony, absence and erasure, language and silence, and identity. It is his film that facilitates the staging of Noria's testimony, about her childhood in La Folie shantytown in Nanterre, and her memories of 17 October 1961, when she was a young child. Likewise, it is through the film that questions of objectivity, the visual, and authenticity are explored, as Sebbar frustrates expectations of the documentary genre, through her fictional and ekphrastic rendering of the imagined documentary.

Critics almost invariably point to Sebbar's own hybrid status, both straddling and caught between two cultures.[35] In this novel Sebbar's presentation of identity is

[33] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 296. Although formal features of the novel have been discussed, for instance Fiona Barclay examines its multivocal nature in her *Writing Postcolonial France: Haunting, Literature and the Maghreb* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011), p. 42, there has been little focus on the ways in which the text draws attention to its status as a text and to processes of representation more broadly.

[34] For a more expansive discussion of the interconnections and overlaps between memories of the Holocaust and the Algerian War of Independence in the novel, see Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, *passim*; Kathryn Jones, 'Through the Kaleidoscope? Memories of 17 October 1961 in novels by Nancy Huston and Leïla Sebbar', in *French and Francophone Women Facing War/Les femmes face à la guerre*, ed. by Alison S. Fell (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 211–27; and Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), *passim*.

[35] A number of critics have observed the hybrid nature of Sebbar's identity and how this emerges in her writing. Kate Roy, for example, identifies a 'multiple otherness', see her chapter 'A Multiple Otherness: Beginning with Difference in the Writing of Leïla Sebbar', in *Alienation and Alterity: Otherness in Modern and Contemporary Francophone Contexts*, ed. by Paul Cooke and H. M. Vasallo (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 264–87. Sebbar identifies herself as a 'croisée', at the intersection of East and West. For a discussion of this categorization, see Michel

characteristically multiple, shifting, and hybridized.[36] I argue that Sebbar uses the textually rendered documentary film to renegotiate boundaries between 'French' and 'Algerian', but equally between film, fiction, memory and imagination, rendering the very concept of collective memory problematic.[37] She challenges the myth of unified political struggle, on both sides, and in doing so contests the possibility of clear-cut, dichotomous categories, between victim and perpetrator, resistance and collaboration, and memory and forgetting. Such a probing of the limits of the text itself, produced at that interstitial point between fiction and the visual, and the resulting intermediality created by the ekphrastic depiction of the documentary film, implies a sense of transcending boundaries that I contend is a compelling way of thinking about memory and indeed identity.

Sebbar's novel explores the memory of the events of 17 October 1961 through three young protagonists living in contemporary Paris. Their parents played various roles in the protest, from *porteurs de valises*, to children who lost their parents that night, but their relationships to the young Amel, Louis and Omer are frequently characterized by silence and ruptures about the Paris massacre.[38] Amel is a young *Française* of Algerian descent living in Paris; her mother, Noria, grew up in the pro-nationalist shantytown of La Folie in Nanterre with her migrant grandparents and was a young girl at the time of the protest. She witnessed the event as a child, too young perhaps to integrate or process the action either directly or as a memory, and yet she was, and continues to be, directly implicated in, and, indeed, interpellated by, the events. She belongs to the '1.5 generation', one of many symbols of 'inbetweenness' that function as a leitmotif throughout Sebbar's work. Noria's silence on the subject of 17 October makes Amel feel distinctly cut off from her own Algerian *and* Parisian heritage. Louis is the son of Flora, who is Noria's radical anti-colonial French friend, imprisoned for her resistance. As a journalist, Omer fled the bloodshed of post-liberation Algeria with his mother and is taken in by Flora, Louis's mother. The national identities and political orientations of the characters portray a sense of the blurring of clear-cut boundaries that the novel explores on various levels. Semiotic questions about the relationship between

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Laronde, *Leïla Sebbar* (Paris: Editions l'Harmattan, 2003), p. 16; and Mildred Mortimer, 'Coming Home: Exile and Memory in Sebbar's *Le Silence des rives*', *Research in African Literatures*, 30 (1999), 125–34 (p. 25). As Michel Laronde has remarked, 'son identité culturelle est à l'écoute de ces situations de croisements multiples qui inspirent sa création romanesque'; Laronde, *Leïla Sebbar*, p. 16.

[36] As Françoise Lionnet argues, the fact that Sebbar's novels are 'unclassifiable' in traditional terms of either 'French' or 'Francophone' not only unsettles the opposition between the centre and the periphery, but, moreover demands, a rethinking of these 'pedagogical and ideological categories'; Françoise Lionnet, 'Narratives Strategies and Postcolonial Identities in Contemporary France: Leïla Sebbar's *Les Carnets de Shérazade*', in *Writing New Identities: Gender, Nation and Immigration in Contemporary Europe*, ed. by Gisela Brinker-Gabler and Sidonie Smith (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 62–77 (p. 66).

[37] The difficult question of collective memory has been central to much existing scholarship. Many analyses focus on the ways in which Sebbar re-inscribes immigrant memories into metropolitan history. See, for instance, Barclay, *Writing Postcolonial France*, p. 41–49; Dawn Fulton, 'Elsewhere in Paris: Creolised Geographies in Leïla Sebbar's *La Seine était rouge*', *Culture, Theory, Critique*, 48 (2007) 25–38, *passim*; and Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, p. 297. Michel Laronde, in 'Effets d'Histoire: représenter l'histoire coloniale forclose', *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 10, 1–2 (2007) 139–55, explores how the novel stages the process of anamnesis in its reclamation of lost immigrant memories. Anne Donadey had previously suggested that the novel is part of a process of anamnesis and collective rewriting in order to remember this obscured moment, in her 'Anamnesis and National Reconciliation: Re-membering October 17th 1961', in *Immigrant Narratives in Contemporary France*, ed. by P. J. Proulx & S. Ireland (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001), pp. 47–56.

[38] Jim House and Neil MacMaster point out that there are different types of silences generated by October 1961. Jim House warns that the study of memory should not, 'conflate silence (non-verbalisation) with forgetting', for such an approach to memory, can run the risk of valuing memory only from within the 'public realm'; Jim House and Neil MacMaster, *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 191. Sebbar represents silence not as the opposite to, but rather as a vital part of, memory; just as for Freud silence is 'a significant manifestation of the memory function itself'; see Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 250.

signs, labels, words and referents emerge, as what 'French' and 'Algerian' signify will be called into question, as much as what constitutes 'nous' and 'vous' in this postcolonial context.

Although the definition of documentary genre is 'slippery', it is generally considered a form of representation premised on a more direct relationship to the referred 'truth' or 'reality' than overtly fictional genres.[39] As John Ellis points out, the genre is riddled with paradox or 'logical impossibility' as it is a construct that seeks to 'reveal the real without mediation'.[40] Bill Nichols observes that one key feature of this tradition is the direct connection between documentary and the historical world, and furthermore that it 'contributes to the formation of popular memory'.[41] Nichols points to the status of the genre as 'visible evidence' of a shared experience, or history, affirming the link, which Sebbar explores in the novel, between this form of media, which seeks to represent its subject faithfully, and the processes of representation that structure memory, and our relationship to the past.

However, many scholars equally point to the lack of clear generic distinctions and markers. While the realm of documentary might appear to be the non-fictive, non-narrative, objective reflection of reality, it is clear that the boundaries between fiction and documentary are in fact more fluid. We know, for instance, that documentaries make use of practices such as editing, emplotment and re-enactment; they can be ideologically charged and call on imagination. In fact, much theoretical work characterizes documentary as a marginal or boundary representational form.[42] In the novel, Sebbar exploits this boundary status of documentary film to bring attention to the tangled relationship between the referent and modes of representation, with important implications for her conception of memory. In contrast to analyses concerned only with content, and the *subject* of 17 October 1961, here I suggest that form, and metatextual questions about representation more broadly, are primary to Sebbar's exploration of memory and identity.

Louis's flat is located opposite *La Santé* prison, and his idea to make a short film on the prison, as viewed from his flat, serves as a springboard to introduce his mother's narrative, which is framed by the motif of imprisoned space. His mother was imprisoned for resistance activities during the Algerian War of Independence, 'en province, à Paris'[43] highlighting some of the ways that the war being fought mostly 'over there' came spilling onto metropolitan soil.[44] Louis wants to see more closely, or bring into focus, those excluded from society, or made invisible, in captivity in the very heart of Paris. Indeed, *La Santé* prison is unique precisely because of its spatial and ethnic divisions. The prison will also function as a

[39] John Ellis, 'Documentary and Truth on Television: The Crisis of 1999', in *New Challenges for Documentary*, 2nd edn, ed. by Alan Rosenthal and John Corner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005 [1988]), pp. 342–60 (p. 342).

[40] Ellis, p. 342.

[41] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. ix.

[42] Nichols insists that the separation between the two is not guaranteed or absolute, but rather establishes a sense of fluidity at this boundary zone; Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. xi. The genre is frequently invoked through these borderline figures: Christian Metz, for example, identifies non-narrative genres as 'marginal provinces' and 'border regions', quoted in Michael Renov, *Theorizing Documentary* (New York, London: Routledge, 2012), p. 1.

[43] Leïla Sebbar, *La Seine était rouge* (Paris: Thierry Magnier, 2003), p. 25.

[44] As Catherine Dana points out, 'cette date marque un événement particulier à plusieurs titres: d'abord, il a eu lieu à Paris et transporte ouvertement la guerre d'Algérie (1954–1962) sur le sol métropolitain'; Catherine Dana, 'Les Enfants Antigone', *French Forum*, 29 (2004), 113–25 (p. 113). For a thorough account of the complexities and paradoxes of this process of decolonization in Algeria, see Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France*, 2nd edn (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2008 [2006]), *passim*.

palimpsestic space for Sebbar, in which unexpected connections between memories are revealed through the over-writings, re-inscriptions and erasures of Second World War memorials by the characters. However, it equally facilitates the exploration of the interrelationship between race, identity, citizenship, urban space and social control in both the past and the present.

Initially, the third-person narration recounts Flora's story of having been imprisoned during the Algerian War of Independence as one of the *porteurs de valises*, and it is Louis's film that opens up communication between him and his mother. Flora's story is structured around *points de suspension*: 'elle disait qu'elle avait rencontré des femmes qu'elle n'aurait pas connues autrement et qu'elle ne regrettait pas ce temps même si… elle n'achevait pas son récit'.[45] The ellipses signal not only the unfinished narrative but they also function as a mark or sign of what cannot be expressed with words. Their presence indicates and highlights the absence of words, and implies a gap for the interlocutor between the experience that they are trying to describe and the vocabulary available to them. Textually, it recalls the device that structured Georges Perec's *W ou le souvenir d'enfance*,[46] and the effect that it creates is redolent of that point in the documentary *Shoah* (1985) where Claude Lanzmann pushes Holocaust survivor Abraham Bomber to the edge of his memory and similarly to the edge of his capacity to articulate his experience.[47]

The communication between Louis and his mother, reflected in the dialogic structure of the text, is characterized by a sense of coming closer to, and then retreating from, the 'truth' for which Louis is searching: 'vous commencez à parler et vous vous arrêtez'.[48] Louis's film is directly connected to knowing the 'truth' about the Algerian War of Independence, but from the outset Sebbar troubles this. While Louis does initially want to know 'la vérité sur cette guerre',[49] the definite article of the abstract noun truth indicating his wish to fix the past and experience in order to know it, this is immediately challenged by Flora: 'quelle vérité? […] la vérité…c'est difficile'.[50] The interrogative adjective 'quelle' implies that truth is not fixed, or indeed singular, but rather that it is multiple and requires that a choice be made between the various options on offer. This view of 'truth' reflects the position of the documentary viewer: multiple, diverse and fragmentary 'truths' or clues to 'truth' must be pieced together with the rigour of a historian. Louis's own conception of truth mutates at once, acknowledging the subjective nature of truth, as well as his own quest for it: 'ta vérité, celle de papa…'.[51] Louis wants to know the stories of his parents and he is almost conceding that it is precisely this very subjective angle he seeks, a desire which led Margaret-Anne Hutton to observe that Louis's personal quest for the past is strongly tied into his sense of identity.[52]

Flora argues that even if she were to try to tell her story, it will lack precision, clarity

[45] Sebbar, p. 25.

[46] Georges Perec, *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* (Paris: Denoël, 1975), *passim*.

[47] *Shoah*. Dir. Claude Lanzmann. New Yorker Films. 1985. Guy Austin points to this landmark moment in his *Contemporary French Cinema: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 26. Lanzmann describes this silence as the 'silence de Bomba'; see his *Shoah, Une pédagogie de la mémoire* (Paris: Les Editions de l'Atelier/ Editions Ouvrières, 2001), p. 10.

[48] Sebbar, p. 26.

[49] Sebbar, p. 26.

[50] Sebbar, p. 26.

[51] Sebbar, p. 26.

[52] Margaret-Anne Hutton asserts that Louis's desire to know about the past is directly linked to his 'unformulated sense of self'; Margaret-Anne Hutton, 'From the Dark Years to 17 October 1961: Personal and National Identity in Works by Didier Daeninckx, Leïla Sebbar and Nancy Huston', in *Violent Histories: Violence, Culture and Identity in France from Surrealism to the Néo-polar*, ed. by David Gasgoigne (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 155–73 (p. 164).

and interest as it was so long ago: 'mais tu n'auras qu'un aspect, minuscule, trop partiel… Plus de trente-cinq ans… Tu imagines. On aura oublié, ce sera flou, approximatif, sans intérêt'.[53] This is revealing, as it depicts Louis's documentary and memory itself as inherently selective, cutting out as much as it exposes, simultaneously hiding and revealing, the past both coming into and out of focus. The mode of capturing the experience is not up to the job and his documentary will be blurry and lacking precision, offering only an approximate outline of what happened. 'Tu imagines' Flora asks Louis, as if mocking the thought of a documentary comprising of blurry, uncertain, incomplete memories. Imagination, however, is precisely what this documentary will require from the viewer and, as Alain Resnais has famously commented in another context, imagination is also the very fabric of memory.[54] As in Lanzmann's *Shoah*, the oral testimonies of the various witnesses filmed in the diegetic present of *La Seine était rouge* are full of gaps and silences, and rely on the imaginative engagement of the viewer, reflecting the creative and imaginative dimension of all remembering in the very form of the film.

Having established the uncertainty and incompleteness of the memories and the inescapably creative aspect to both making and watching a documentary, Sebbar immediately reminds us that it is still an art form more directly concerned with the 'facts' of history. Louis and his father will have to search for material evidence and clues to support the film: 'il [le père de Louis] veut bien parler, chercher des archives pour moi, des photos, des journaux, des tracts….'.[55] Here, his work as a documentary filmmaker mirrors the research of a historian or a detective searching for clues and traces. For Louis the narrative of wider, collective, public memory, the film about the *porteurs de valises* and 17 October, is interwoven with a personal quest for traces from the past. Flora asks why Louis wants to make this film, she reminds him that 'c'est pas ton histoire'.[56] The use of the possessive pronoun serves to underscore that for Flora that narrative does not belong to Louis; it only belongs to the generation who experienced it directly. It is neither his history, nor his story to tell.

For Louis, it is precisely because it is not his history and narrative that making the film is so important: 'justement je veux le faire, je le ferai parce que c'est pas mon histoire. 1954–1962. Le 17 Octobre 1961, à Paris et vous dans cette guerre coloniale'.[57] Louis's desire to know the past is directly linked to the present and to a sense of national identity through the reference to Paris. Paris is the shared space that connects him to his mother. Both testimony and memory transmission involve a form of breaking down of bounded subjects as the reader or listener tries to enter into the experience of somebody else. Private becomes public and it is the interface *between* the witness and the auditor that produces the act of testimony.[58] The collective dimension of both memory and national identity implies the convergence and interaction of multiple and diverse subjectivities.

A fragmented sense of temporality and varied subject positions produce a kaleidoscopic effect on the reader, through the film. Omer is struck by the words 'liberté, égalité, fraternité' above the door to *La Santé* prison and as he reads the plaque commemorating Second World War resistance, connoting de Gaulle and the resistance

[53] Sebbar, p. 26.

[54] 'I have always refused the word 'memory' a propos my work. I'd use the word imagination', quoted in André Pierre Colombat, *The Holocaust in French Film* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1993) p. 121.

[55] Sebbar, p. 26.

[56] Sebbar, p. 26.

[57] Sebbar, p. 26

[58] As Shoshana Felman has argued, to testify is more than just to report or narrate, but rather 'memory is conjured here essentially in order to *address* another, to impress upon a listener, to *appeal* to a community'; Shoshana Felman, 'In the Era of Testimony: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*', *Yale French Studies*, 79 (1991), 39–81 (p. 39).

'myth', he suggests that Louis comes back later to film.[59] Located at the entrance to the prison, the sign essentializing the values of the Revolution and the modern French Republic highlights the disconnection between signs, words, signifiers, or captions, and referents, especially in the context of the massacre. This is quickly followed by a description of Louis filming Omer's graffiti, over-writing the original plaque for the Second World War, and drawing attention self-reflexively, and metatextually, to the mode of representation. From an outside perspective that captures not only the film as viewed, but also Louis's filming, the reader is then plunged into the film itself:

> Louis filme le mur de la prison, à l'angle de la rue de La Santé et du boulevard Arago, la plaque commémorative fixée sur la pierre et à droite, les lettres rouges bombées:
>
> "1954–1962
> DANS CETTE PRISON
> FURENT GUILLOTINES
> DES RESISTANTS ALGÉRIENS
> QUI SE DRESSERENT
> CONTRE L'OCCUPANT FRANÇAIS" [60]

Sebbar draws attention to the incomplete, partial and misleading relationship between signs and referents in the plaque and the over-writing, which in turn exposes a crisis of official commemoration. However, the reader is also let into the moment of Amel and Omer watching the film, 'plusieurs fois'.[61] Scholars have observed that this key motif of re-inscription through the red spray paint, in which the central characters over-write official narratives and monuments of commemoration with alternative historiographies, represents urban space as a palimpsest.[62] The palimpsest not only invokes the idea of distinct strata layered upon each other, traces of what lies beneath just visible from the surface, but it is also inextricable from the question of writing itself.

Fiona Barclay conceives of the text as palimpsestic, incorporating multiple views, including both French and Algerian.[63] In her analysis of haunting as a persistent figure in postcolonial Francophone writing, Barclay argues that the red graffiti create 'ghostly memorial sites, replacing the absence left by amnesia with a transient presence'.[64] Such an emphasis on spectrality is instructive as it is characterized by the combination of, rather than opposition between, present and past, absence and presence. Derrida's concept of *spectres* negotiates a space between, in addition to the sense of something lingering or left over, and this is another way of expressing trace, *différance*, and supplement, or the endless deferral of meaning in the chain of signifiers that is writing.[65] What is striking about both motifs, the palimpsest and spectrality, is the ways in which they foreground a sense of co-existence and simultaneity that has important implications both for the distinct memories in question, and for further metatextual questions about writing, representation and meaning production more broadly. Such a sense of co-existence challenges the legitimacy of dichotomous paradigms and thinking, and does so through the content of the novel, and through its awareness of, and reflection on, the form.

Barclay is attentive to the way in which Sebbar enacts the re-inscription, transposing

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[59] Sebbar, p. 28.
[60] Sebbar, p. 29.
[61] Sebbar, p. 29.
[62] See, for instance, Barclay, *Writing Postcolonial France*, p. 47; and Fulton, 'Elsewhere in Paris', p. 28.
[63] Barclay, p. 47.
[64] Barclay, p. 47.
[65] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 11.

almost exactly the words from the official plaque for the Second World War to highlight the roles of the Algerian immigrants as resisters and the French as the oppressors,[66] and to imply the ease with which France went from the role of victim to that of perpetrator. She argues that this emphasizes agency for the Algerian immigrants, thus rescuing them from the persistent perception of them as victims, and, moreover, that it allows for the 'reinsertion' of 17 October 1961 into the grand narrative of French history, rather than conceiving of it as immigrant and thus not French.[67] As I demonstrate, however, Sebbar in fact establishes not an inversion of these categories, but a profound challenge to the construction of such oppositional frameworks.

What existing analyses of this moment of re-inscription seem to miss is the importance of the fact that it is relayed through the film. The ekphrastic rendering of the documentary serves to highlight the gap: between the film itself and its description in the text, between text and image. Here, the imagined and fictional film is translated, as far as that is possible, and remediated through words. The reader is let into the world created by the film, the image of Omer's red letters alongside the original plaque, but also, crucially, into the filming of the plaque for the film: revealing both the product and the process. The narrative present is itself experienced as multiple. This constant interplay between the narrative frame of the film as watched, and the frame of the film as filmed,[68] brings attention to the process of filming itself, and creates multiple and expanding frames. The question of the frame, and the boundary that it invokes, is a significant one, for it is the question of where a text or a film begins. The reframing that the novel enacts, and the way in which the referent itself is already textual, suggests that Sebbar, like Derrida, establishes a need to 'rethink [the] effects of reference'.[69]

As readers, we access Louis's film not through the visual realm as a viewer would, but rather through a combination of the textual and our own personal imagination. This notion of ekphrasis, that I contend is crucial to Sebbar's presentation of memory, is further complicated by the fact that the film is part of a fictional and imagined narrative. What results is an intermediality exploring modes of representation in relation to memory. Ekphrasis is a literary mode for representing a visual referent with words, originally a work of art. In a sense, the 're' of representation is doubled, as James A. W. Heffernan explains, it might best be defined as 'a verbal representation of a graphic representation'.[70] Such a notion of multilayered, intertextual, and indeed intermedial reflections and remediations provides a useful context for Sebbar's novel. According to Heffernan's definition, 'what ekphrasis represents in words, therefore, must itself be representational',[71] rather than just visual. Sebbar likewise doubles the 're' of representation and draws attention to the gaps between referents and representations, and linguistic and visual processes that attempt to capture the referent.

Louis's film portrays Noria's testimony of the Paris massacre and starts where many protestors started, on the outskirts of Paris, in La Folie. The story she tells, of the first 'second-generation' of immigrants in Paris, those children born to parents who had recently arrived from Algeria themselves, repeats and re-enacts the experience of Amel already established in the novel. It is the experience of Perec and François Maspero, of hushed

[66] Barclay, p. 48.

[67] Barclay, p. 48.

[68] This device is also used by Michael Haneke, in *Caché* (2005), where the question of the frame is equally at the heart of the film's theoretical concerns. See for instance, James Penney, 'You Never Look at Me From Where I See You: Postcolonial Guilt in Caché', *New Formations*, 70 (2011), 77–93.

[69] 'Deconstruction in America: An Interview with Jacques Derrida', trans. by James Creech, *Critical Exchange*, 17 (1985), 1–33 (p. 19).

[70] James A. W. Heffernan, 'Ekphrasis and Representation', *New Literary History*, 22 (1991), 297–316 (p. 299).

[71] Heffernan, p. 300.

conversations when the child enters the room.[72] Even as a primary witness at the event itself, some understanding of what was happening remains out of reach. The speech marks signal the end of Noria's speech in this part of the film and we are reminded that what we are reading is a *transcription* of Louis's film.[73] Her description of La Folie requires imagination from both the viewer and the reader, which is 'interrompue' with the film's exposition of archive photos—the raw materials of a documentary—of La Folie.[74] The attempt to recuperate the past, anchored in the space of the shantytown, first traverses the verbal and the textual, and then the intradiegetic viewer of the film is offered an image, as the words stop. For the reader, however, the image is also unavailable.[75] The existence of the photos is signalled but ultimately remains unseen to the reader. There is a mark for an absent presence, calling to mind the Derridean notion of writing *sous rature*: of writing a word, crossing it out, but leaving both word and deletion in tact, or legible. The word is inaccurate yet necessary,[76] and writing under erasure captures this inherently doomed attempt of words to relay the referent. Sebbar also seems to suggest that the vessels that carry meaning, be they images or words, as signifiers may not be completely apposite, and cannot be accurate reflections of the concepts for which they stand, but they are *necessary*.

Noria's testimony reveals why victim/perpetrator or resister/oppressor dichotomies are reductive and inaccurate templates for the memories at stake. Her father and uncle were on opposing sides of the Algerian liberation movement, one with the FLN and one with the MNA.[77] The violence between the two groups highlights the loss of nuance in accounts that contextualize the events in terms of a purely Franco-Algerian oppositional framework. Sebbar unsettles the categories of French and Algerian, not least through the inclusion of Flora's narrative as an example of French solidarity with Algerians, and the story of Papon's *harki*, who does not recognise himself in the blue uniform. Noria remembers the *calots bleus* ('J'étais petite, j'avais neuf ans, mais je savais faire la différence'),[78] who her father described as being collaborators and even worse than the French police. Despite her young age, Noria could tell that these men were 'pas des Français', presumably because of their visible ethnic origin. In fact, she tells us that these men looked just like her father: '[les] hommes du bidonville… des Algériens'.[79] Significantly, she recalls being able to make or see the difference. The motifs of disguise and assimilation are complicated, however, as she recognizes the *harkis* as 'nous', Algerians, but recognizes the uniform as what marks these men as 'collaborateurs', although equally she can see that they are not 'Français'. The play of visual markers of identity that are performed in the public sphere reveals the categories of French/Algerian and resister/collaborator to have been blurred and inverted in such a way as to render them almost meaningless.

Sebbar demonstrates that Algerians did not universally support the FLN, and reveals how historical narratives are constructed around a set of categories, often oppositions, that fail to capture nuances, the in-between shades of grey. The textual depiction of the documentary challenges clear-cut divisions between objective and subjective, collective and individual, text and image; and memory is likewise represented as a boundary process.

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[72] François Maspero, *Les Abeilles et la guêpe* (Paris: Seuil, 2002) p. 12.

[73] Sebbar, p. 35.

[74] Sebbar, p. 35.

[75] This is reminiscent of a passage in Daeninckx's *Meurtres pour mémoire*, when Inspector Cadin reads through Roger Thiraud's thesis on Drancy and finds 'de nombreuses pages comportaient des blancs encadrés au rayon et annotés. Roger Thiraud avait prévu l'emplacement exact des illustrations, photos, graphiques, plans'; Didier Daeninkcx, *Meutres pour mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 174.

[76] Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1967), p. 31.

[77] Sebbar, p. 43.

[78] Sebbar, p. 43.

[79] Sebbar, p. 43.

Sebbar explicitly draws attention to the processes through which the reader apprehends experience, showing how identities are constructed and how the past is mediated. The ekphrastic film doubly refracts the referent, which is at once a real moment from the past and an imagined testimony. Questions about language and visual processes of representation are foregrounded to highlight the gaps in referentiality, ultimately reminding us that there is nothing essential or intrinsic about national identities in a postcolonial context. There is an intermedial quality to *La Seine était rouge*, in terms of how the reader is made to 'see' the film and, likewise, in the constant interaction between representation, fact, fiction, imagination and memory. Sebbar thus reflects in the very form of the text the challenge to bounded categories that is so crucial to her representation of memory and identity.

CLAIRE MACLEOD PETERS
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BOOK REVIEWS

Polygraphies: Francophone Women Writing Algeria. By ALISON RICE. Charlottesville, VA, and London: University of Virginia Press, 2012. 256 pp. Pb $55. ISBN: 978-0-8139-3291-0 (Cloth); ISBN 978-0-8139-3293-4 (Ebook)

Polygraphies examines the particular ways in which seven French-language women writers from Algeria write the self in autobiographical texts which also speak of the lives of others. The neologism of the work's title points toward the propensity of these authors to insert a plurality of voices and accounts into their texts which, as a result, attest 'to otherness, to multiple belongings, to difference' (p. 3). The volume focuses on the writings of Hélène Cixous and Assia Djebar, while also exploring those of Maïssa Bey, Marie Cardinal, Malika Mokeddem, Zahia Rahmani, and Leïla Sebbar, bringing together canonical writers alongside lesser-known counterparts. The ethnic, religious and generational backgrounds of this selection of authors highlight the diversity of identities in Algeria, and the texts analysed underscore the range of modes of autobiographical writing. Rice convincingly illustrates a strong link between the works and the intimate connection of their authors to their birthplace, while nuancing that 'this birthplace is not exactly a "homeland"' (p. 62), but a place where political, cultural, linguistic, and scholastic conditions give rise to complicated feelings of belonging.

In *Polygraphies*, Rice identifies a shift in the terms of autobiographical writing by French-language women writers from Algeria that is less concerned with establishing a definitive or 'true' version of events, than with shaping a witness account of the experience of events in which truth is both multiple and simultaneous. The theoretical framework, established in the Introduction, is largely shaped around Derrida's understanding of the literary text as a space where multiple truths lie, and the interactions between fiction and testimony. The genre of 'testimony' proposed as a designation for the 'polygraphic' texts under analysis effectively reflects the deconstruction of the truth/untruth binary and takes into account the authorial intention to bear witness. Arguing that 'testimony' is 'by definition, other-oriented' (p. 9), insofar as it is inclined toward its reader, Rice asserts that these authors' autobiographical innovations encompass not only altered writing strategies but also adapted reading positions: unlike the interlocutor of the juridical testimony, the reader of the autobiographical testimony is not invited to judge or to evaluate the testimony, but to take an active part in the act of bearing witness. Given the approach of 'testimony' adopted, drawing upon the wealth of research on *testimonio* in Latin American Studies would undoubtedly have proved fruitful to the analysis here, although Doris Sommer's work is briefly mentioned.

The four sections of the book demonstrate how the central thesis is variously played out in the texts analysed. The two chapters of the first section examine, in the first, the influence of a European tradition of literary confession on the writings of Cixous and Djebar, resulting in testimonial texts in which their authors bear witness to events experienced in Algeria through their revisitation in successive texts, adding another dimension to the understanding of multiple truths. The second chapter undertakes a close reading of Maïssa Bey's *L'une et l'autre* (2009), exploring how she presents a generically hybrid literary self-portrait which seeks both solidarity and singularity. The second section focuses on the representation of Algeria in the text, and that of each writer's relation to the country of birth, initially exploring texts by Cardinal, Cixous and Djebar which deal with representations of the mother, and the lasting and complex association between mother, schooling and the nation for the adult writer. This is followed by a chapter on the echoes, in the works of Bey

and Djebar, of Camus's *Le Premier homme* (1994), in which the mother figure also played a decisive role in imagining the homeland.

The third section addresses the writing of the body and its diverse meanings in the context of women writers from Algeria from a range of different backgrounds. Beginning with a chapter devoted to the texts of Cixous, it explores the evolution of her treatment of writing the body throughout her corpus, up to and including writing the body in illness and ageing. From this follows a chapter focusing on sexuality and the body in the works of Bey, Djebar, Mokeddem, and Sebbar in which Rice demonstrates how ethnicity and gender coincide in crucial ways in French-language Algerian women's autobiographical writing. The four chapters of the fourth and final section analyse depictions of interpersonal relationships, first in the works of Djebar, which are argued to portray the end of sexual relationships as a transition into mobility and opportunity, and second in the representation of the hybrid sexual relationship in Mokeddem's *L'Interdite* (1993). We come across Rahmani for the first time in the penultimate chapter, which explores a daughter's fraught relationship with her *harki* father as expressed in texts which give voice to his experience alongside that of her own. The final chapter returns to the concerns of the first, exploring the cohabitation of authorial singularity and female solidarity in the text in Bey's *Cette fille-là* (2001).

Innovative in its approach to autobiographical texts as an active process of shared witnessing that requires non-hierarchical reading practices, *Polygraphies* makes a useful contribution to the fields of Francophone and transnational literary studies, contemporary women's writing, and autobiographical writing. The author deftly draws out the connections between these works without failing to flag the many differences that separate their authors, providing a useful and informative study that will appeal to students and researchers alike.

KATE AVERIS
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Algerian National Cinema. By GUY AUSTIN. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012. viii+227 pp. Hb £60. ISBN: 978-0-7190-7993-1

This monograph is the first book-length study of Algerian cinema in English since the edited collection *Algerian Cinema* (BFI, 1976). Austin opts for an open national-cinema paradigm, justifying this with reference to Higbee's contention that transnational approaches in film studies are 'not specific enough or sufficiently politically engaged' (Higbee, quoted in Preface, p. viii). The book offers a cogent and compelling study of cinema as a terrain of identity construction and contestation in post-colonial Algeria. The book is written in a readable style and takes into account the political and cultural contexts of film production to examine how films negotiate both national and global history.

The Introduction is a well-documented survey of the history of modern Algeria, with a focus on national trauma and the dysfunctional relation between state and society. Against common perceptions of Algeria as a blanket Arab-Islamic country, Austin foregrounds its historical complexity as an Amazigh (Berber) country which has undergone centuries of foreign invasions and cross-cultural encounters, the latest and most dramatic of which was colonization by the French (1830–1962). This historical framework allows Austin to appreciate the complex images of the nation in postcolonial cinema, which has understandably been dominated by attempts 'to wrest Algerian identity away from colonial constructions, as well as a mythologizing of lost national unity (and a critique of this

nostalgic idea)' (pp. 4–5). The second chapter provides a brief history of Algerian cinema with a focus on its origins in the War of Independence (1954–62). Austin argues that Algerian cinema actively mythologized that struggle in the post-independence era under the FLN regime, which was also the only funding body in the 1960s and 1970s. He questions commonplaces about this relationship between cinema and state and unveils how *cinéma moudjahid*, the officially sanctioned films about the liberation struggle, prevailed in Algeria in the 1960s and 1970s. The state cinema silenced the country's cultural and social diversity by endorsing the FLN's Arabization policy and 'specific socialism' under the rule of Houari Boumedienne (1965–78). This 'cinema of remembrance' (p. 24) ultimately alienated Algerian audiences through its gross omissions and schematic repetitions. In the early 1970s, *cinéma djdid* was born to counter the mythologization of national space by the *cinéma moudjahid*. The new cinema focused on 'social issues such as unemployment, industrialisation, and the role of women in Algerian society' (p. 25). *Cinéma djdid* was rather short-lived because the war film made an emphatic return with Mohamed Lakhdar-Hamina's epic *Chronique des années de braise* (1975), which was made on a colossal budget and won the Palme d'Or at Cannes. However, following Merzak Allouache's popular comedy *Omar Gatlato* (1976), and the death of Boumedienne in 1978, many films have questioned the master narratives of national identity and government by giving voice to marginalized groups such as women, Imazighen (Berbers), and youth. Remarkable films in this category include *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (Assia Djebar, 1978) and *La Citadelle* (Mohamed Chouikh, 1988).

The introduction of free market economics led to the gradual liberalization of the film sector in the 1980s. State censorship gradually receded and hitherto taboo subjects such as Amazigh identity could be tackled on screen. Austin concurs with most historians that October 1988 was a 'watershed between Algeria as postcolonial state and Algeria as neo-colonial state' (p. 126). The Black October protests and their repression with live ammunition by the regime spelt the end of the FLN's mythology of 'the one million dead' against the French colonizer. The subsequent civil war in the 1990s brought Algerian cinema to a standstill with cinemas closing and filmmakers being silenced or fleeing Algeria for their own safety. The rebirth of Algerian cinema in the new century has been slow and is still largely below expectations in both quantitative and qualitative terms. However, notes Austin, 'Algerian cinema is starting to reconfigure itself after two decades of attrition and collapse' (p. 177).

Austin devotes individual chapters to the following themes: the war of liberation on screen, gender, Amazigh cinema, mourning and melancholia, the 'invisible war' (civil war), and memory and identity. The concise film readings are informed by a Bourdieusian approach which puts films in context whilst appreciating their aesthetic representations of private/public space, rural/urban landscapes, rituals, gender dynamics, and Islamist fundamentalism. Austin examines the relationship of the films with the state and how even works conventionally classed as official propaganda contain elements of possible counter-narratives to the hegemony of the FLN. Austin includes a pioneering chapter on Amazigh cinema, which emerged in the mid-1990s with Abderrahmane Bougermouh's *La Colline oubliée* (1996). After three decades of official suppression, Berber-speaking films emerged as the long-awaited 'Third Cinema' (pp. 187–88). Expanding on Bourdieu's study of Kabylia, the chapter focuses on the representation of public and private space as well as on the politicization of folklore in this young cinema.

Algerian National Cinema will be more than simply the authoritative book on Algerian cinema in English for years to come. It is an essential reference for students and researchers in African film and cultural studies. Lucid and thought-provoking, this monograph will also

be a useful resource for introductory and advanced courses in (Francophone) postcolonial studies.

JAMAL BAHMAD
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Caribbean Literature and the Public Sphere: From the Plantation to the Postcolonial. By RAPHAEL DALLEO. Charlottesville, VA, and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011. 296 pp. Pb $29.50. ISBN: 978-0-8139-3199-9

At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Raphael Dalleo's study of Caribbean literature as it relates to the 'public sphere' presents itself as an incredibly useful tool for viewing with hindsight the Caribbean in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For Dalleo, the public sphere is composed of two 'registers', 'material reality and imagined ideal', which 'interact as a complex dialectic: the institutions and structures of the public sphere shape writers' imaginations even as writers imagine alternative arrangements and new ways of thinking that help create new public spaces and identities' (p. 2). Accordingly, it is possible to identify certain patterns and 'types' of intellectual activities and aspirations among Caribbean writers: the intellectual revolutionary (C.L.R. James); the intellectual turned politician/diplomat/technocrat (Eric Williams); the intellectual-as-exile affecting public discourse from afar (C.L.R. James, René Depestre); the intellectual-as-exile eventually disappearing from the public sphere (Marie Vieux Chauvet, George Lamming); and the intellectual trying to find new ways to affect the public sphere from within spaces generally hostile or indifferent to literary production (the Sistren Theater Collective, *testimonio* writers such as Miguel Barnet).

Dalleo's book strives for a balance between Caribbean literary production in French, English, and Spanish, and succeeds in offering a succinct depiction of socio-political literary life in the Caribbean from abolitionism until the first decade of the twenty-first century. He limits his study of the literary public sphere to textual production that is 'lettered' (p. 21). In other words, non-literate intellectual production such as that emerging from what Susan Buck-Morss describes as the dynamism between European Freemasonry and African-derived philosophical-religious practices does not fall under the scope of Dalleo's work. As such, Dalleo's book is extremely helpful in taking account of what he depicts as a predominantly masculinist public sphere, one that may even be portrayed as a literary framework dominated by a certain machismo (p. 96). He explains that in more recent decades such a machismo has only been intensified by the 'breakdown of masculine public space' (p. 210), in which there is a concerted 'attempt to create a new heroic and masculine public role for the writer in a context where even that identity has been commodified' (p. 223). Here, Dalleo's work complements Enrique Krauze's *Redeemers: Ideas and Power in Latin America* (2011), a recent study of how leadership and intellectualism in Latin America are always undergirded by a need to do 'good,' to 'redeem,' to be the 'martyr'. Dalleo's work pushes Krauze's thinking to consider that maybe this need to redeem comes from the discomfort of social class. Dalleo shows how the 'literate' public sphere, especially in the early and mid-twentieth century, would be one trapped by its own elitism. Where for many years writers such as Martí, Carpentier, Césaire, or Depestre were supposed to serve as representatives for the people, as interlocutors 'speak[ing] for' the 'folk' or the 'public and counterpublic' (p. 97), Dalleo explains that more recent writing, such as *testimonio*, 'unlike the products of the global

culture industry or European high modernist literature, should be a popular form but one produced by the people rather than imposed on them' (p. 182).

Dalleo's intellectual history of the Caribbean, then, offers the missing volume to a series of books that help to understand that the Caribbean literate public sphere, especially the one that receives 'public' attention, has been constructed from the 'middle,' sandwiched in-between a colonial and neocolonial order 'above' and a more popular one 'below'. Here I refer to Mimi Sheller's *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (2012), published a year after Dalleo's book, and which also spans contexts from early colonialism to the present day, looking at texts from throughout the Caribbean. In its gesture to cover a transcolonial and translinguistic context, Dalleo's book also follows in the wake of Silvio Torres-Saillant's *An Intellectual History of the Caribbean* (2006) and J. Michael Dash's *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (1998).

Dalleo traces a trajectory that links literature—in the form of novels, literary magazines, theatre groups, and cinema—to the writers themselves. These texts are in turn considered within the larger socio-geopolitical context of a Caribbean that would go from mostly direct domination by Europe to new orders of governance, whether as independent states, as coalitions, as departments, as overseas territories, or as protectorates. He shows how literary figures, such as Martí, Roumain, Eric Williams, C.L.R. James, Chauvet, and Dionne Brand, to name just a few, motivated the move out of colonialism, serving as major agents in fostering socialist political agendas and/or anticolonialist struggles, and in the later decades of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, struggling with a feeling of the irrelevant role of literature in contributing to public life.

In sum, Dalleo's book is a sort of 'must have' for Caribbean 'area' scholars, scholars such as myself, familiar with certain 'islands' and certain 'languages', whose 'Francophone' training taught me about Condé, Confiant, Chamoiseau, Frankétienne, and Glissant, but left me on my own to learn about Lamming, McKay, Seacole, and Wynter. Each chapter follows in a rough chronological order, but in juxtaposing texts from different Caribbean spaces, Dalleo is able to offer, as seen above, new approaches to reading not only Caribbean literature, but also the complexity of Caribbean geopolitical landscapes. In so doing, his work offers a beautiful illustration in the humanities of anthropologists Yarimar Bonilla or Gary Wilder's resistance to scholarship that only reinforces normative notions of 'nationhood', where most nations of the 'global south' would fall into the category of 'failed nation states' or 'non-states'. Instead, Dalleo's book depicts a Caribbean, alive and well, carving out alternative solutions to dealing with an oppressive global order.

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Témoignages fictionnels au féminin: une réécriture des blancs de la guerre civile algérienne. By NEVINE EL NOSSERY. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012. 235 pp. Pb €50. ISBN: 978-90-420-3592-8

The Algerian civil war of the 1990s, otherwise known as the *décennie noire*, was characterized by a profound ambiguity. While the Islamist *fous de Dieu* massacred thousands of innocent civilians, evidence also suggests that the Algerian military was involved in assassinations. During this period, moreover, Algeria was cut off from the rest of the world, and individuals who, like Tahar Djaout, endeavoured to bear witness to the ongoing horrors were often

silenced by death. The authors examined by Névine El Nossery—primarily Assia Djebar, Malika Mokeddem, Leïla Marouane, and Latifa Ben Mansour, although others are referenced—write simultaneously from within and beyond this complex web of violence and muteness, and their narratives can be read as attempts to fill in the gaps and silences surrounding the civil war. The decision by the author to focus specifically on female writers is linked to the fact that women constituted a major target for *intégristes* throughout the 1990s. Published during the civil war, the literary texts in question are thus testament to the women's remarkable courage and resilience in the face of erasure.

In examining how Djebar, Mokeddem, Marouane, and Ben Mansour give expression to the reality of violence, El Nossery raises a number of issues central to Holocaust literature and trauma studies, namely, the relationship between ethics and aesthetics, and how literature might transcend its 'literariness' to create 'une fiction du réel' (p. 9). In responding to these questions, however, El Nossery does not turn explicitly to trauma theory, even if it clearly informs her approach. Instead, rather than allowing established paradigms to overshadow the narratives in question, her detailed textual analysis reveals the distinct ways in which each author responds to these issues. Central to El Nossery's study is her understanding of a *témoignage fictionnel*, described as 'un mode artistique qui, basé sur des faits ayant eu lieu, demeure une production fictionnelle et dont les traits esthétiques revêtent une place primordiale dans l'édifice romanesque' (p. 10). Between fact and fiction, ethics and aesthetics, a specific form that traverses genres arises in response to an historical event.

The concept of *témoignage fictionnel* is also elaborated alongside 'témoignage factuel', 'témoignage factuel fictionnalisé' and 'fiction testimoniale' (p. 17), enabling a clearer notion of the concept to develop, particularly as analysis of the literary texts is juxtaposed with other examples from these genres. Chapter 1 deals with the origins of the violence of the 1990s, examining in particular the historical, theological, and political connections between Islamic fundamentalism and the violence perpetrated against women during the civil war. The chapter does an excellent job of providing the context for both the war and the women's writing, which is examined in detail in the next four sections. Chapter 2 is devoted to Djebar's work and, in examining the relationship between history and literature, it elicits the connections between autobiography and collective history in her narratives. Chapter 3 focuses on Mokeddem's textual nomadism and the manner in which the *errance* in her writing calls upon the reader to (re)interpret and engage continuously with her *témoignage fictionnel*. In Chapter 4 El Nossery examines historical and sociological approaches to rape, before examining how it is represented in the writings of Marouane. Finally, Chapter 5 offers a reading of the relationship between fact and fiction in the work of Ben Mansour, revealing how her narratives are based in reality while also operating as a form of psychotherapy for the author.

Inherent to El Nossery's argument is the notion that the detour that characterizes the *témoignages fictionnels* of the four authors is precisely what enables them to give meaning to the Algerian civil war. Neither fact nor pure fiction, the texts represent the unrepresentable in ways that challenge any monolithic interpretation of the *décennie noire*. El Nossery's arguments are detailed and thoughtful throughout, and her elaboration of a specific form of *témoignage fictionnel* offers new avenues for future scholarship. Her contextualization of the civil war will be of particular interest to individuals concerned with either the specifics of the conflict or Islamic fundamentalism more generally, but her work is most likely to appeal to scholars of Djebar, Mokeddem, Marouane, or Ben Mansour.

LUCY BRISLEY
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Le (néo)colonialisme littéraire: quatre romans face à l'institution littéraire parisienne (1950–1970). By VIVAN STEEMERS. Paris: Karthala, 2012. 234 pp. Pb €24. ISBN: 978-2-8111-0764-2

Over the past fifteen years, theoretical analysis of the 'global literary marketplace' has accompanied increased critical concern with the powerful political and economic structures that shape the work of postcolonial writers and readers (Huggan, 2001). This work has recently been complemented by a number of ground-breaking archival studies in Anglophone African book history (Currey, 2008; Low, 2012; Davis, 2013). The strength of Vivan Steemers' contribution to this broad area of research is her dual focus on how Francophone African literature was published and read in the period surrounding the independences of 1960. Her book offers a helpful and engaging overview of the publishing trajectories and newspaper reviews of four key Francophone African novels: *L'Enfant Noir* by Camara Laye (Plon, 1953), *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* by Mongo Beti (Robert Laffont, 1956), *Les Soleils des Indépendances* by Ahmadou Kourouma (Presses Universitaires de Montréal, 1968), and *Le Devoir de violence* by Yambo Ouologuem (Le Seuil, 1968). She draws on Bourdieusian sociology of the literary field, Genette's notion of paratext, and Hans Jurgen Jauss's reception theory to investigate the neocolonial bias of 'le discours africaniste, révélé par le processus d'édition et de réception' (p. 12).

The book is structured chronologically in two parts that address a decade either side of the 1960 independences. A brief history of the 'Zeitgeist' of each decade draws out their main differences, followed by close analysis of paratext, publishing trajectory and press reviews for the four titles. The publishing landscape and press criticism of the 1950s, against the backdrop of decolonization, Cold War politics, and alongside the birth of the *livre de poche*, was characterized by a taste for increasingly nebulous notions of exoticism and authenticity. The latter acted invariably as a synonym that confirmed—and in turn reduced—the African identity of an author such that, as Steemers notes, the term lost 'à peu près toute signification pertinente' (p. 63). The decade following the independences was initially, according to Steemers, one of distraction and ambivalence regarding African novels. African nationalism and a more hesitant attitude among metropolitan publishers gave way only gradually to the celebrated stylistic experimentation of Kourouma and Ouologuem at the end of the decade (the manuscripts of both authors had been turned down several years earlier).

Steemers' choice of case studies enables a series of revealing contrasts: from Camara Laye's rapturous reception in the mainstream press to Mongo Beti's virtual absence from newspaper columns; from Ahmadou Kourouma's exile (in print) in Canada, to the acclaim surrounding Yambo Ouologuem's Renaudot prize and subsequent uproar regarding his plagiarism case. Much has of course already been written about each of these books, not least Adele King's painstaking research on Camara Laye's novels and their contested claims of authorship (2002), Christopher Miller's foundational work on this period (1985; 1990), and Richard Watts' study of Francophone postcolonial paratext (2005). Interwoven with her own probing analysis, Steemers provides a cogent account of this existing criticism, much of which is only available in English to date.

One aspect of the book that might perhaps have been pushed further is the significance of a critical constellation for these four novels that links up Belgium, Canada and France. Camara Laye's book, as Adele King has argued convincingly, was co-authored with right-wing Belgian editors and journalists, Robert Poulet and Francis Soulié, and partly financed by the Ministère de l'Outre-mer. Fifteen years later, Quebec offered an alternative to the supposed capital of the World Republic of Letters after Kourouma's *Les Soleils des indépendances* was turned down by Le Seuil and Présence Africaine. Steemers points to the need to attend to local reading settings for Francophone African texts in relation to their

discrepant global contexts (p. 145; p. 169). Yet these examples also suggest the possibility of nuancing further her references to 'le lecteur occidental moyen' (p. 166) or 'l'institution littéraire parisienne' (p. 3) that are central to the concerns of this book.

Reception is a notoriously difficult, yet vital and revealing object of research (Procter, 2012). Throughout this perceptive account, Steemers points our attention to the historical importance of press reviews as a genre, despite what might be perceived as their limitations: an inherent lack of hindsight, their role as publicity, and a frequent absence of specialist knowledge on the part of the reviewer which can result in superficial, impressionistic readings (p. 64; p. 117). As the analysis demonstrates, there is much to be gleaned from the ephemerality of newspaper print over these two decades (p. 161). We note, for example, the gradual shift from particularized ethnological criteria and reluctance to engage with anti-colonial realism, to a vaunting of universal themes and aesthetic innovation by the late 1960s. At times, however, we miss the critical counter-voices. These might have included the many reviews that appeared in African-interest journals and press (*Présence Africaine*, *Paris-Dakar*, *Bingo* etc.) in this same period. How did these challenge, resist, or dialogue with the Eurocentric 'discours africaniste' of metropolitan press? Further textual examples might also have complicated the received narrative of the Francophone African novel in the post-war period. Why, for example, is a stylistically ground-breaking novel such as Malick Fall's *La Plaie* (Albin Michel, 1967) or Seydou Badian's *Sous l'orage* (Présence Africaine, 1957) absent from today's 'canon' of African literature (at least as taught in universities of the global North)? How might the neocolonial biases revealed by this history of reception encourage us to reshape that canon? Because it stimulates such questions, Steemers' book is an extremely valuable introduction to the key issues in the publishing history and reception of African literature in the post-war period in France. She summarizes a considerable literature on these four foundational literary figures and offers a necessary incitement to expand our understanding of the postcolonial politics of the Francophone literary marketplace.

RUTH BUSH
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Couleurs de l'esclavage sur les deux rives de la Méditerranée: Moyen Âge – XX^e siècle. Edited by ROGER BOTTE and ALESSANDRO STELLA. Paris: Karthala, 2012. 394 pp. Pb €32. ISBN: 978-2-8111-0800-7

In recent years, there has been an upsurge of interest in the role of slavery in the economic and social development of many societies from Ancient times until at least the nineteenth century. Slavery is most commonly associated with the enslavement of Africans and the Atlantic trade, and its impact upon the Americas is widely addressed in scholarship as well as in political and social commemorations. The volume of essays considered here, *Couleurs de l'esclavage sur les deux rives de la Méditerranée*, is a welcome complement to such work, examining as it does the long-neglected phenomenon of European slavery, responding in particular to the fact that slavery around the Mediterranean basin has to date been largely ignored. In doing so, it offers a more complete and more complex insight into the multifaceted institution of slavery from the Middle Ages and beyond.

The editors' short four-page Foreword sets about underlining the importance of European slavery, and gives a somewhat brief overview of the history of slave origins in the Mediterranean. It rightly insists that slavery cannot be seen simply in terms of black and

white, but is rather a complex phenomenon: slave markets were fed not only by Africans, but also by Slavs, Caucasians, and other Orientals, with slavery based on religion and ethnicity as well as skin colour. This historical and contextual information might, in the absence of an introduction or conclusion to the volume, be usefully expanded, especially for readers new to the topic. As it stands, the strands holding the volume together—outside of the overarching concerns with slavery and the Mediterranean space—are difficult to pin down.

The volume sets out to address a number of key issues, including whether skin colour or gender—or indeed both—impacted upon a slave's potential escape from servitude (via *rachat*, or fleeing the plantation, for example); the sexual use of slaves; racist or 'exotic' views of the 'Other' and their effect on the fate of slaves; notions of slave hierarchies; and the differences between the slave condition in Islamic and Christian lands. To this end, the sixteen contributors—fifteen historians and one anthropologist—draw extensively on archival research, and gather sources and information from a diverse bibliography to offer snapshots of slavery around the Mediterranean, in countries and regions including Italy, Portugal, Granada, Andalusia, and the Maghreb.

A number of the essays in Botte and Stella's compilation offer a broad synthesis of little known aspects of historical episodes. Salah Trabelsi, for example, examines commerce and slavery in the Maghreb from the seventh to the tenth centuries, while Frédéric Hitzel considers slavery in the Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern era (from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries). Others provide much more focused analyses, and many essays examine hitherto unexploited resources. Henri Bresc, for example, offers a detailed study of black and white slaves in Sicily in the 1300s and 1400s, discussing the 'cycles' (p. 57) of slavery during that time, the make-up of the slave workforce, the eventual liberation of slaves, the role of the Church and of the State, and slave integration—in both religious terms and into Sicilian society. Antonio de Almeida Mendes' essay, 'Les "Portugais noirs" de Guinée', gives a compelling account of contact between Portuguese and Africans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Salvatore Bono's short essay, 'Selon l'arrivage sur le marché', aims to disprove the common preconception that slavery in Italy ended in the sixteenth century. He provides evidence that slaves from multiple ethnicities existed in Italy until the nineteenth century, arriving as a result of the Atlantic trade, but also the trans-Saharan trade, or as prisoners of war from the Balkans, and including, of course, Muslim slaves. Judith Scheele's contribution, meanwhile, sheds light on the under-examined issue of slavery in Algeria, but also admits to taking some liberty with the term 'slavery', highlighting the problematics that can arise in defining what exactly constitutes enslavement.

The various contributions to this volume provide significant and contrasting insights into the varieties of slavery in the Mediterranean space, demonstrating that this is a fascinating area for research, and one that merits more attention. The broad thematic scope of *Couleurs de l'esclavage* ensures that it will be of interest to scholars working on the historiography of slavery and its evolution outside of the traditional transatlantic realm.

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Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction. By WENDY KNEPPER. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2012. 274 pp. Hb $55. ISBN: 978-1-61703-154-0

Wendy Knepper's well-researched and insightful volume examines the diverse literary, political and theoretical writings of Patrick Chamoiseau. The monograph takes a broadly chronological approach and comprises eight chapters. The way Knepper examines works side-by-side from a given period allows the reader to gain a sense of the interaction between Chamoiseau's literary work, his activism and his participation in non-literary artistic projects. The first chapter provides a detailed overview of Chamoiseau's life and works to date, covering his early plays, his collaborations in visual arts projects, his journalism and political writings as well as the better-known novels and reflections on literary practice. Knepper argues that the central role of strategic deception in Chamoiseau's literary work undermines certainty, creating an arena where the ambivalent nature of Martinican identity can be explored. In Chapter Two, Knepper charts a movement from the oppositional dynamic of the earlier, unpublished plays, where the lines between oppressor and oppressed are clearly drawn, to the more ludic exploration of the role of the marvellous in the encounter with the postcolonial real. The chapter argues that *Manman Dlo contre la fée Carabosse* (1982), though sometimes neglected or dismissed by critics, constitutes a pivotal moment in Chamoiseau's transition from his early 'rebel' phase towards a more Glissantian poetics of relation. This is one of the most valuable chapters in the book, as it explores unpublished material not easily accessible to the general reader.

Chapter Three contains illuminating readings of *Chronique des sept misères* (1986) and *Solibo Magnifique* (1988) describing them as 'engaging in a kind of cric-crac dialogue with each other' (p. 61). Knepper analyses Chamoiseau's use of textual collage, his growing use of meta-fictional devices and his interrogation of past–present relations. Adopting a view which challenges criticisms of Chamoiseau's work as overly nostalgic, Knepper argues that *Chronique* and *Solibo* act as examples of 'speculative fiction' (p. 94), as they return to the past as a means of imagining alternative realities for the present and future. The image of several paths diverging from a single point can also be invoked to describe the experience of the reader, as the use of collage and polyphony means that there is more than one way of proceeding through these texts.

In Chapter Four, Knepper offers readings of Chamoiseau's writing from the late 1980s and the 1990s, commenting on lesser-studied works such as *Au temps de l'antan* (1988) and *Lettres créoles* (1991) alongside the much better-known *Eloge de la créolité* (1989) and *Texaco* (1992). Knepper engages with the controversy generated by the *Eloge*, yet notes that it sparked off a decade of productive debate. An examination of *Au temps de l'antan* and *Lettres créoles* shows the increasingly central role played by the figure of the storyteller in Chamoiseau's work. Knepper's analysis of the influence of Frankétienne brings out the importance of the tropes of the messianic hero and twinned figures, while Glissant's work is shown to have played a determining role in Chamoiseau's concept of writing, where the visual, auditory, tactile and topographical are fused. This concept of writing finds expression in *Texaco*, which explores the overlaps between linguistic, spiritual and physical realities.

In Chapter Five, Knepper writes fruitfully about the complexities of Chamoiseau's writing on childhood, which seeks to illustrate the harmful effects of the assimilationist education system, while drawing extensively on the literary production of metropolitan France. Knepper's readings of the ways in which Chamoiseau subverts the relationship Proust establishes between sensory experience and memory, and her exploration of the use of medieval quest narratives in *A Bout d'enfance* (2005), are particularly stimulating in this chapter. Knepper reaches the conclusion that there is a tension between the autobiographical trilogy and *Eloge de la créolité*, as the *Eloge* calls for the recovery of an authentic self, while the trilogy questions the possibility of such a recovery.

Chapter Six traces this shift from the quest to return to an essential identity towards a more open-ended engagement with the relationship between past and present. Knepper examines Chamoiseau's use of increasingly complex narrative devices in the period following *Texaco* and his denunciation of the insidious nature of contemporary domination in his non-fiction. This chapter provides a helpful account of the column Chamoiseau published in the Martinican weekly *Antilla* between 1993 and 1996 and of its relationship to *Ecrire en pays dominé* (1997). The latter work sees the development of the *Guerrier de l'imaginaire*, a figure who first appears in Chamoiseau's screenplay for Guy Deslaurier's film, *L'Exil du roi Béhanzin* (1994). Chapter Seven examines this screenplay, as well as those Chamoiseau wrote for *Passage du milieu* (2000), *Biguine* (2002), *Nord-Plage* (2003) and *Aliker* (2009). *Biblique des derniers gestes* (2002) and a collaboration with Thierry Ségur on a comic-book, *Encyclomerveille d'un tueur* (2009), are also examined. Knepper argues that in the first decade of the twenty-first century, Chamoiseau's writing becomes less representational and explores instead the forces that stimulate or impede the transformation of the self's relationship to the world. These forces are often depicted as playing out in the concentrated, charged arena of the body. This is especially the case in *Biblique des derniers gestes*, which Knepper reads as a creolized form of the epic.

The final chapter of the book looks at two texts co-authored with Glissant: *Quand les murs tombent: L'identité nationale hors-la-loi?* (2007) and *L'Intraitable beauté du monde: Adresse à Barack Obama* (2009), alongside *Manifeste pour les 'produits' de haute nécessité* (2009), a collection of essays which includes contributions from both authors. Chamoiseau and Glissant argue that the concept of a nation-state with clearly defined borders is becoming obsolete, and predict that borders between different countries will become more fluid. Knepper links this argument with Chamoiseau's exploration of the porous boundaries of consciousness in *Un dimanche au cachot* (2007) and *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* (2009). The volume concludes by arguing that Chamoiseau's study of relational modes of being allows him to move beyond the play of masks that lies behind his earliest works. Alienation is replaced by creative interaction and nourishing crossings between inner and outer worlds. This richly informative and well-written book contains much sound and original analysis and will prove valuable to undergraduates, graduates and researchers with an interest in Chamoiseau and Caribbean literature.

SARA-LOUISE COOPER
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La Tunisie réinvente l'histoire: récits d'une révolution. Edited by HEDI SAIDI. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012. 250 pp. Pb €25.50. ISBN: 978-2-296-99283-2

Hedi Saidi opens the final chapter of this urgent, timely, and insistent collection with the following statement: 'Le jour se lève sur la Tunisie et sur l'Égypte, porteur d'espoir mais aussi d'incertitudes. Le soleil de la liberté commence à briller sur ces deux pays aux civilisations millénaires' (p. 227). This is a diverse collection, one whose goal, as Suzanne Citron states in the Preface, is to 'désacralise' (p. 11) certain *idées reçues* about historiography, immigration, the myths surrounding nation-states, and, more broadly, the status of the archive. Citron sees the revolution in Tunisia as a metonymic moment, one that 'concrétise emblématiquement toutes ces interrogations' (p. 12). In addition, the collection shows that it is important to

interrogate Tunisia on its own terms, rather than as always already in relation to France. Saidi's boldest claim comes at the end of his introduction to the collection: 'Cette révolution a marqué la fin de l'orientalisme' (p. 28). Tunisians will make and write their own histories. Unfortunately, the title is false advertising, as only the second half of the collection is about Tunisia. That several chapters do not correspond to the collection's promised focus does not detract from their importance. In Chapter 2, for example, historian Abdoulaye Sow interrogates post-independence history and the impact of colonization on present-day politics, democracy, and human rights in Mauritania, outlining what is needed for change to occur. In the third chapter, historian Jean René Genty argues that the Franco-Belgian border played an important—and often overlooked—role in the history of Algerian resistance to French colonization. When the Algerian War for Independence moved to Europe, the FLN found that Belgian ports offered alternatives to French sites under heavily surveillance. Genty concludes that it is difficult to find precise and nuanced information on Belgian attitudes to 'la question algérienne' (p. 128)—which may be in part due to Belgian attitudes about colonization in the Congo—and that more work needs to be done. In Chapter 4, Fatiha Dahmani interviews Algerian women in their 80s and 90s who left Algeria between 1950 and 1962 in order to join their temporary-worker spouses in France. She argues that, contrary to previous research on the subject, 'ces femmes ont été actrices de leurs départs, et plus largement dans le processus migratoire' (p. 157).

The second part of the collection is entitled 'Le 14 janvier 2011, les Tunisien(ne)s réécrivent leur histoire'. In Chapter 5, Tunisian historian Brahim Belgacem situates the Tunisian revolution in history, looking at Tunisia's distinctive characteristics as 'un pays précurseur' (p. 168). He offers comparisons between presidents Bourguiba and Ben Ali, crediting Ben Ali with 'la pauperization de la classe moyenne' (p. 172). The things for which Ben Ali was loathed—corruption, surveillance, and a culture of fear, to name but a few—led to, Belgacem argues, a transformative energy that ignited the revolution and surprised the world. He concludes with an important claim: post-revolutionary Tunisia is not, and will not be, a static place.

In Chapter 6, researcher and member of the *Centre de Tunis de droit constitutionnel pour la démocratie*, Nidhal Mekkil, argues that legislative and presidential elections in post-revolution Tunisia do not guarantee a rupture with dictatorship. Mekkil questions how it will be possible for Tunisians to move beyond a past so authoritative that it left 'des séquelles dans nos corps, nos esprits, nos réflexes et notre langage' (p. 192). He offers a detailed examination of the stakes of *L'Assemblée constituante tunisienne* (ANC), constitutional reform, societal participation, the separation of powers, and human rights. Mekkil argues that one of the lessons the world can learn from Tunisia is that a dictatorship is not the result of one political party in power, but rather the absence of a civil society capable of organizing its citizens. He outlines the possibilities of what the ANC can achieve in order to preserve the dignity and assure the liberty of all Tunisians.

In Chapter 7, Lamjed Bensedrine critiques the terminology and binaries that characterize much of the debate around post-revolution Tunisia. Rather than terms such as 'démocratique moderniste', he calls for 'Dignité et Justice' (p. 200). What system, he asks, will provide this for all Tunisians? Bensedrine hopes that by clearing some of the roadblocks to debate, real discussions can happen. This includes rejecting simplistic binaries such as democracy/modernity and *laïque*/Islamist. Furthermore, he characterizes the term 'democracy' as a kind of empty signifier, one full of 'perversions'. Post-revolutionary Tunisia needs a specifically Tunisian solution, he argues, one that does not erase the past. He critiques Bourguiba and the Tunisian elites for erasing Tunisia's *patrimoine* in favour of an anonymous modernity, and claims that future progress must be selective and integrative.

Editor Hedi Saidi contributes an introduction and two chapters to the volume, the first of which is a wide-ranging critique of the so-called East vs. West divide that meanders

across history and around the Mediterranean. His final chapter offers a snapshot at speed of a more modest roadmap for the revolution. Saidi critiques the West's backing of Ben Ali, outlines his fall and uncertainty after the fact, support for Nahdha's 'discours islamo-intégriste' by some Tunisians, and the realisation that 'une réelle démocratie' (p. 242) will take time. Saidi offers several reflections on the October 2011 elections, ending with two conclusions: Bouazizi's merit was to show that revolution is essential for new ideas, and that the revolution in Tunisia marks the end of ideological orientalism.

Saidi and historian Sonia Combe end the collection with an 'Appel', calling for an opening up of the Tunisian archives; Tunisians have the right to see and understand 'comment ils ont pu vivre pendant trois décennies sous une dictature. Ils ont le droit de connaître le degré de corruption à tous les niveaux et le nom des responsables' (p. 250). This call is also made for 'l'avenir du monde arabe' (p. 250) more generally.

The political situation in both Tunisia and Egypt, which Saidi points to in Chapter 8, is changing weekly, if not daily. This collection offers a timely glimpse of the stakes of revolution and what comes after. It is a collection that will see many more like it, covering the same topic, but from different locations along the changing roadmap.

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De-Westernizing Film Studies. Edited by SAËR MATY BÂ and WILL HIGBEE. London and New York: Routledge, 2012. 280 pp. Pb £21.99. ISBN: 978-0-415-68784-3

This rich volume gathers the voices of academics, critics, practitioners of film production, filmmakers, and interdisciplinary artists around the issue of 'de-Westernizing' both the medium and the study of film. By that, the authors of the twenty-four chapters comprised in the volume (a wink at the twenty-four frames of cinema?) mean: challenging the binary modes of thinking West vs. the rest; illuminating and challenging the Western ideologies and assumptions as well as theoretical and historical approaches that undergird the field of film studies. The book is both ambitious in its scope—as it seeks to de-Westernize cinema at the time of globalization after the various postcolonial moments experienced across the world—and humble in its approach—as it proposes multiple approaches and case studies as openings towards a de-Westernizing way, and does not claim to have all the answers. An open-ended quest, it offers 'an "un-centered" version of knowledge that gives credit to multiple view points' and 'an emergent method for studying the balance of power in cinema as a global and local cultural force' (p. 13).

The book is divided in four parts: three sets of essays in film studies and one group of thirteen interviews. The first part deals with 'the cinematic imaginary' and its discourse. A chapter on Flow Motion takes us from the analysis of the American frontier and the Other (the Native American Indian) in American film to the analysis of sci-fi cinema, and finally to the 'space-themed, non-narrative cinema' possible with the three NASA cameras put in space observing the cosmos. Here—or rather, out there!—the West and its dichotomy Self/Other disappear to make room for the emergence of the 'cosmos as an object of aesthetic experience' (p. 31). The second chapter returns to earth and questions the theoretical framework that has been the staple of Black Diaspora cinema studies, in particular Paul Gilroy's seminal *Black Atlantic* (1994). Saër Maty Bâ demonstrates how Black diasporic film has cracked open the triangular space and its limits, and prefers Glissant's 'archipelization' as an apt term to encompass the rich substrata of the Black diasporic film production. This

leads to a chapter by Sheila Petty demonstrating how African and African diaspora theories have long been contributing to debates on postcolonialism and globalization. Petty articulates a savvy Duboisian 'double-consciousness' interpretation of Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), a reading via the Fanonian black gaze of Mel Hondo's *Soleil O* (1970), and shows how Raoul Peck's *Sometimes in April* (2005) illustrates Glissant's concept of the *tout-monde* (the whole world as a network of interrelated communities leading to ever-changing cultural reformulations and formations). This chapter points to a de-Westernized theoretical toolkit that is already there for the taking.

The second part of the volume revisits the notions of transnational cinema, nation and community as seen from non-Western perspectives. The opening chapter looks at Tunisian filmmaker Férid Boughedir's *Halfaouine: L'enfant des terrasses* (1990) and *Un été à la Goulette* (1997) via a reading of Partha Chatterjee's postcolonial dual notion of the nation, defined in *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1993) as 'material'—its outer forms: economy, structures, technology—and 'spiritual'—its inner content: religion, language, domestic, family life). Drawing a parallel between postcolonial 'material transnational funding and its 'spiritual' content in tune with its local culture, Higbee 'displaces' Boughedir's cinema as neither orientalist nor Western, but squarely situated outside Western or postcolonial binaries. This chapter is in sharp contrast with the following essay by Shahab Esfandiary who reads Mohsen Makhmalbaf's work as neither transnational nor border-free, but rather as deeply ensconced within Western parameters and ideologies (in particular, *Kandahar*, 2001; and *Scream of the Ants*, 2006). Esfandiary attacks what he considers a myth spun by and around Makhmalbaf as a filmmaker engaged in unmoored 'voluntary vagrancy' (p. 104). Chapters 7 and 8 propose a further unmooring of cinema studies and film content away from the West: Yifen T. Beus, as she decodes West African Dani Kouyaté's *Keïta! L'héritage du griot* (1995) and Fiji islander Vilsoni Hereniko's *The Land Has Eyes* (2004), outlines de-Westernizing move in narratives with the ancestral technique of storytelling at work in both films—a griot-inspired one and *talanoa*, or 'talk', 'discussion' in Oceania. In the next essay, Kate E. Taylor-Jones studies the dynamics of an Asian-centric force at work in current Asian cinema, and traces its roots to the Japanese 'Greater East Asian Film Sphere' (p. 127) in existence prior to World War II. Two case studies present a current vision of a pan-Asian identity (with its tensions, paradoxes and rich textures) via its transnational stars, funding and narratives: *Perhaps Love* (Hong Kong and China, 2005) and *Cape No. 7* (Taiwan, 2008).

After these essays on cinemas outside Europe and the US invoked as de-Westernizing from the outside, the volume moves on to its third section: 'New (dis) continuities from "within" the West'. This third cluster of essays looks at what is not Western or specifically mainstream in the West. Nathan Abrams proposes a 'reading Jewish' (p. 142), i.e. decoding a set of embedded meanings referring to Jewish life, characters, culture, and traditions to which Jewish viewers have access, for instance, a screening of Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980). Using a '*midrashic*' approach (an old form of investigation of the Bible), Abrams brings to light a narrative not immediately apparent in the Hollywood text, thus suggesting an approach both countering and preceding the Euro-American/Western-centred narratives. Next, Katharina Lindner proposes a queer reading of two films centred on the athletic female body: *Girlfight* (Kusama, 2000) and *The Gymnast* (Farr, 2006). Drawing on Laura Mark's *The Skin of Film* (2000) and Jennifer Baker's *The Tactile Eye* (2009), she envisions a new 'queer' approach that makes strange the Western viewing of the film, and reorients the viewer towards a haptic, tactile perception of the cinematic image away from the Western gaze. Finally, William Brown proposes a vision of a 'cinematic commons' (p. 172) that exists for everyone on earth, across borders, across cultures and languages. Such a 'common' consists in 'the *process* of editing continuity, or movement… over time' (p. 172), as opposed to a particular style of editing, and suggests a universally understandable language of movement

(*kine*), an overarching power of audiovisual communication regardless of cultural differences. De-Westernizing film is here understood as not taking the Western part out of film, but rather as seeing cinema as having a common component, which then disturbs the West vs. the rest mode of thinking.

The final part of the book is fascinating in the diverse answers it provides to six questions posed to each of the interviewees. The questions range from seeing film as a universal medium to what de-Westernizing film might entail and to the very possibility of such a project in today's transnational filmmaking ventures. The responses vary. For instance, film is seen as a hybridized, universal medium, most interviewees agree. It is universal but each film is deeply rooted in the local culture (Bakrim, Benlyazid); it is a universal *tool* only (Coco Fusco); it is universally comprehensible but not universally accessible (Lindvall); it is not universal since it cannot speak for everyone (Barlet), or because one film is understood differently by people across the world (Akomfrah).

This ambitious, ground-breaking book seems to leave no stone unturned in its multiple questioning of a multi-faceted question that still hovers over postcolonial film studies; it is careful to describe its approach and findings as in becoming, always/already moving—even if the reader is faced with occasional puzzling positions. (Is, for instance, a *midrashic* approach towards *The Shining* a truly de-Westernizing gesture, or is it a return to the critical approaches of the West's first monotheistic tradition of exegesis?) This reader salutes the editing work that must have gone on to ensure a high quality prose in all of the assembled essays and interview transcripts, and welcomes this move away from the field of postcolonial studies as we know it. This is a crucial book.

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Africans in Europe: Studies in Transnational Practice in the Long Twentieth Century. Edited by EVE ROSENHAFT and ROBBIE AITKEN. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013. 304 pp. Hb £70. ISBN: 9781846318474.

This bold and imaginative collection of essays makes a highly valuable contribution to the ongoing scholarly project of recovering the history of a 'black' presence in Europe. Its insistence on the geographical reach of this presence, and on the complex histories of mobility that underpin it, is to be particularly commended and points to important new interpellations of the relationship between the 'national' and the 'transnational', and of the significance of historic and contemporary networks that arise from these contexts.

A finely thought-out theoretical introduction by the editors demonstrates the adroit organization of this collection and clearly sets out the overall agenda: to highlight the ways in which the experiences of black people in Europe from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first allow new insights into transnational black identity, and the forms of intercultural competence that allowed Africans and people of African descent to cope with the challenges of finding 'their place' in different European locations. In this regard, an overarching theme of the volume is the importance of networks (socio-political, personal, cultural) across ethnic boundaries and in environments that, even today, as Donald Martin Carter reminds us in the context of contemporary Italy, have seen Africans 'as temporary sojourners and not members of a community' (p. 205). As the editors point out, 'among the resources that transnational subjects have to acquire is a heightened capacity for

forming networks and alliances in everyday life that cross the borders of social and cultural familiarity, including not least those of race' (p. 11).

Several contributions allude to the intermeshing of the political and the personal. However, Jennifer Anne Boittin's rich account of the lives of black men (and to a lesser extent women) in interwar France is particularly stimulating and valuable for the attention it pays to the ways in which transnational living shaped the development of informal and formal political consciousness. Whether discussing Malagasy immigrants in Paris for the 1931 *Exposition coloniale* or black anti-imperialist activists like Lamine Senghor and Tiémoko Garan Kouyaté, Boittin pushes this volume's recurring emphasis on interracial relationships to explore the ways in which establishing family 'roots' in Europe pre-empted, overlapped with, and at times even limited or fractured transnational political alliances. Although much of Boittin's discussion intersects with and develops established thinking on 'black Paris'—indeed the influence of Francophone postcolonial scholarship this evidences is another key feature of the volume as a whole—, her insistence on the value of acknowledging the specific transnational histories of other French cities (Bordeaux, Le Havre, Marseille) is amply demonstrated by other chapters that explore with similar detail lives lived in locations as diverse as Berlin, Turin, London, and different Portuguese towns. The chapter on Portugal by Cecilie Øien, and also the interview with Elleke Boehmer included at the end of the volume, are welcome reminders of the importance of 'whiteness' to understandings of African identities.

Where the geography of *Africans in Europe* is concerned, it is perhaps the chapters on Moscow, however, that most fully demonstrate why a specific 'locale' is deserving of scrutiny and analysis. Together, S. Ani Mukherki's study of 'black' journalism, dance, and theatre in 1930s Moscow and Paul R. Davis's fascinating account of the sojourn of Malian artist Mamadou Somé Coulibaly in the same city in the 1960s underscore the importance of identifying what Michelle M. Wright identifies elsewhere in the volume as 'lateral diasporas', which, 'unlike a vertical diaspora [...], [push] the subject to understand him or herself outside of those identities we are handed passively and more towards identities that reflect one's own movements and aspirations' (p. 228). Although both chapters are careful to situate the history of Moscow's black presence alongside other acknowledged European locations, they also demonstrate that the Soviet capital was 'unique' in the opportunities its particular brand of 'cosmopolitanism' provided to black artists and intellectuals who lived there, but also in the ideological contradictions to which their very presence gave rise. Here, as elsewhere, the history of Africans in Europe is shown to transcend conventional post/colonial understandings as well as urging us to rethink the geography of African/diasporic mobility.

The attention these last chapters pay to the complex ways in which 'African' culturally expressive forms such as dance, visual art, theatrical performance and writing are developed and transformed, but never erased, in a transnational, cosmopolitan context is echoed by many of the contributors to this volume (including John Sealy's chapter on film) but perhaps none so persuasively and memorably as James Smalls's chapter on 'Féral Benga's Body'. His study of photographic, sculptural and textual representations of the Paris-based Senegalese dancer (and contemporary of Josephine Baker) by artists and writers of different nationalities and races is a sophisticated exploration of the ways in which Benga's choreographic choices and knowingly eroticized, exoticized performances became a means to '[promote] sexual and racial agency' (p. 105) transnationally but also contributed to a 'a homoutopic vision of humanity [...], an alternate transnational vision of blackness that spotlights the inherent disruptive, if not subversive potential or racial and homosexual/homoerotic confluence in patriarchy and its liberatory function in the modern world' (p. 101).

In Smalls's account of Benga's transnational influence and cosmopolitan connections we find an exemplary demonstration of so many of this volume's strengths: its insistence on

the geographical diversity of Africans' presence in Europe; its engagement with concepts of performance, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and identity; its attention to origins (and the past) without any suggestion that these should be seen as 'binding' subsequent developments of identity; and its demonstration of the value of testing dominant paradigms and unearthing ignored histories. *Africa in Europe* is the first in the Liverpool University Press series 'Migrations and Identities': its reach and ambition have set the bar high.

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The Colonial Heritage of French Comics. By MARK MCKINNEY. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 2011. 270 pp. Hb $95. ISBN: 978-1-84631-642-5

The present study follows on from the edited work *History and Politics in French-Language Comics and Graphic Novels*, published by Mark McKinney in 2008. His is a new important voice in the study of the relationship between the ninth art and Western (neo)colonialism, which has now been more than forty years in the making. This exploration started in 1971 with *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*, by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart (originally published in Spanish), followed by the latter's *The Empire's Old Clothes: What the Lone Ranger, Babar, and Other Innocent Heroes Do To Our Minds* (1983), Martin Barker's *Comics: Ideology, Power and the Critics* (1989), and the more recent *Bande dessinée franco-belge et imaginaire colonial: Des années 1930 aux années 1980*, published by Philippe Delisle in 2008—seminal predecessors whose influence is acknowledged by McKinney.

Taking comics and graphic novels as true *lieux de mémoire*, McKinney adopts an archeological approach to studying representations in graphic narratives of two major events in French colonial history: the *Exposition coloniale internationale* of 1931 in Paris and the *Croisière noire* which saw Citroën cars take a road-trip across the African continent in 1924–25. Far from limiting itself to an examination of these two events, however, McKinney's study provides a broader view of the graphical rendering of colonial exhibitions and trans-African trips. While the last three of the book's four chapters are devoted to these two phenomena, the first focuses exclusively on the work of Alain Saint-Ogan—an important source of inspiration for Gustave Hergé and one of the founding fathers of Francophone *bande-dessinée*. Saint-Ogan is key to McKinney's analysis as he exemplifies the inextricable links between colonial cultural history and the history of comics. This is demonstrated by his contribution to imperialist propaganda in his newspaper advertisements and illustrations of the 1931 *Exposition coloniale*, as well as his use of 'colonial carnivalesque' in the very popular *Zig et Puce* (1925–56), a mode of colonial representation also studied at length in Louis Forton's *Pieds-Nickelés*.

Alongside this focus, McKinney identifies two other representational tendencies in his corpus, which extends both to the pre- and post-1962 periods: the 'commemorative-nostalgic' and the 'critical-historical'. As far as postcolonial production is concerned, the 'colonial carnivalesque' and 'commemorative-nostalgic' have their roots in a return to the (colonial) origins of French and Belgian comics in the 1980s, which is illustrated by both the republishing of the works of Saint-Ogan and Hergé (the recent polemic surrounding the now controversial *Tintin au Congo* is a good example of such a trend) and a recycling of colonial themes, texts and images to provide contemporary readers with imperial adventure, in an

ironic (with the magazine *Métal aventure*) or celebratory mode (*Les bâtisseurs d'empire*, by Saint-Michel and Le Honzec, 1994). McKinney contrasts this 'colonial nostalgia' with 'critical nostalgia' or pure critique, which belong to the 'critical-historical' sub-genre. Many of these postcolonial graphic novels dealing with the colonial period feature appended bibliographies of historical references, regardless of the writers' memorial agendas, which is also a sign of renewed historical interest in the colonial period. As for McKinney, he clearly inscribes his study under the auspices of the French historians of the *Association pour la Connaissance de l'Histoire de l'Afrique Contemporaine*, and their key concept of 'human zoos', which features in some contemporary rewritings of colonial exhibitions, such as Baloup and Jiro's *Le chemin de Tuan* (2005), and Vehlmann and Duchazeau's 'Un fantôme sur la lune' in *Le diable amoureux et autres films jamais tournés par Méliès* (2009).

McKinney delves into the genealogical history of French comics and uncovers a complex network of intertextuality and intericonography in which contradictory artistic and historical visions of the colonial era coexist. In a country at pains to define its postcolonial identity and still discussing the possible 'positive effects of colonialism', McKinney's study of a medium so widely read by the French population is essential, not least to the creation of a better understanding of the nation's imperial origins and residual imperialism.

FANNY ROBLES
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CONFERENCE REPORTS

After the Empires: Reflections of European Colonialism in a Globalized World

Roskilde University, 29–31 May 2013

'After the Empires: Reflections of European Colonialism in a Globalized World' brought together around fifty scholars to consider the afterlives of colonialism across a diverse range of historical contexts and in a number of different cultural and linguistic traditions. As befitted the hosting institution, Roskilde University, the aim of the event was to contribute to more experimental, innovative forms of research in the postcolonial field, and the colloquium itself tended to adopt a problem-oriented approach without prescriptively setting up a series of research questions relating to the intersections of postcolonialism and globalization.

The conference was refreshingly (and perhaps bravely) multilingual, with papers in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, but the lack of formal interpreting meant that some of the genuine potential for comparatism across cases and traditions was not fully realized. This is regrettable as new work was presented on postcolonialism from, for instance, Italian, Portuguese and Danish perspectives, suggesting that recent publications such as *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures: Continental Europe and Its Empires* (one of whose co-editors, Lars Jensen, was an organizer of this event) are beginning to bear fruit. There were also particularly insightful papers on China and its diaspora by Zoran Pecic of Roskilde University (talking about queer cinema) and Lynda Ng of Oxford (on travel and fiction, in a paper entitled 'European Revenants, Chinese Remains').

Francophone material was well represented, and in addition to my own plenary on slavery and thanatourism in the French Atlantic, there were notably a number of papers on North Africa, with Alice Brown (Université Paris VII Diderot) exploring media discourses and postcolonial realities in the Sahel, and two other contributions (by Florence Lhote, and Nuria Álvarez Agüí of Universidad Complutense de Madrid) on political and cultural questions raised by the presence of a firmly established diasporic community of North African origin in France itself. Other contributions to debate of particular interest were made by Heidi Boisen (Roskilde), who, in a paper entitled 'Writing back or *Littérature monde*? Responses from a few Francophone writers to "la condition postcoloniale"', provided new perspectives on the *littérature-monde* debate. By focusing on Glissant and Ndiaye, Boisen suggested that the hyphen in the term is itself a site of *différance* at which the author can insert him- or herself. She discussed the distinctions between the *littérature-monde* manifesto and the collection of essays that followed shortly after, highlighting the ways in which the latter provided a focus on bilingualism and translation not evident in the former. Sarah Blaney (University of Warwick) spoke on '"Translation as a place of loss"—A study of the translations of Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* and their role in Anglophone postcolonial studies'. The paper tracked, in the case of Fanon, the relationship between source text, culture and target language, considering the ways in which Charles Markmann's 1967 translation of *Peau noire* for Grove Press blunted references to postcolonial responsibility and removed the work from its Francophone context in the Caribbean. Blaney's paper was a clear illustration of the status of postcolonialism as a 'traveling theory', and Nicolas Di Méo (Université Michel de Montaigne-Bordeaux 3) explored what has happened as that body of thinking has returned to France itself. Di Méo spoke on the question: 'why is France so ill at ease with postcolonial theories?', offering a historical, institutional and theoretical overview, and also suggesting the ways in which a Francophone engagement with postcolonialism might reinvigorate and reorientate debate.

The majority of speakers were postgraduates and early-career researchers, which

provided a sense of the vibrancy of postcolonial studies as, in an international and multilingual frame, it adopts new approaches and engages with fresh material. The most striking contribution to the event was, however, by the cultural theorist Alberto Moreiras (Texas A&M), who in a closing plenary with characteristically metacritical resonances reminded those present of the persistent pitfalls of postcolonialism, its tendency towards allegorization and metaphoricity, and its perverse propensity to avoid postcolonial politics. Moreiras, initially involved in debates around decoloniality, has contributed more recently to discussions of posthegemony and of the ways of addressing the gap between postcolonial studies and postcolonial politics. His paper drew thoughtfully on French-language material, most notably Philippe Descola's 1993 ethnographic account *Spears of Twilight* (*Les Lances du crépuscule*), from which he drew on the notion that the Western scholar has a duty not only to reflect on a body of Western knowledge, but also to heed the call in this text: 'Écoute chanter les poissons et apprends!' Referring to the recent work of (among others) Gary Wilder and Nick Nesbitt, Moreiras's paper was a reminder of what now looks like a significant missed *rendez-vous* between Francophone postcolonial studies and Latin American Studies—but at the same time an indication of the potential of developing that dialogue as our field discerns its future directions.

CHARLES FORSDICK
UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

SFPS Postgraduate Study Day: *Allah n'est pas obligé*: Locating Islam in Francophone Cultures

University of Stirling, 20 June 2013

The annual postgraduate study day of the Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies took place at the University of Stirling on 20 June 2013. The event was co-sponsored by the host institution. Doctoral and postdoctoral researchers from four continents came together to debate the location of Islam in Francophone cultures. The choice of theme was motivated by the insufficient amount of scholarship on Islam in Francophone postcolonial studies. Rigorous scholarship on the location of Islam in the French-speaking world, past and present, is susceptible of yielding novel ways of seeing in Francophone postcolonial cultural studies. The study day was also motivated by the belief that young researchers in the field are best positioned, and stand to gain a great deal from paying critical attention to Francophone Islam in an increasingly interconnected world.

Divided into three panels, a publishing workshop and a keynote address, the study day examined the history and current trends in the cultural representations of Islam around the Francophone world. Under the heading 'Screening Islam', the first panel addressed the location of this faith system as an everyday practice and political ideology in the production and reception of North African cinema. In her paper, Stefanie Van de Peer examined the politics of *laïcité* in the often controversial reception of Nadia El Fani's documentary films. The next speaker, Rym Ouartsi, looked into the polemical reception of Laila Marrakchi's *Marock* (2005) in her native Morocco. The feature film was panned by the Islamists and defended by the secular forces in a polarized public sphere. Finally, I provided a contrapuntal analysis of Islam in *Marock*. Through a close reading of the structuring absence of the urban poor in this accented auto-ethnography of Casablanca's French-speaking upper class, the paper unveiled the spectral role of radical Islam in subverting Marrakchi's project of granting postcolonial agency to her suburban characters.

The second panel looked at Islam in Francophone Europe. Amina Easat-Daas discussed some methodological questions in her current research project on political participation amongst second-generation Muslim women in France and Francophone Belgium. Gill-Khan's paper explored how Islam has emerged as a critical paradigm in the literary and cinematic articulations of North African identities in France since the 1980s.

The last panel comprised three papers with a shared focus on Western literary and historical representations of Islam and the Muslim world since the eighteenth century. In the first paper, Mauro Di Lullo looked into violence and terror in Jean Genet's encounter with the Muslim world. The next speaker, Kirsty Bennett, examined Isabelle Eberhadt's invention of her Islamic identity in opposition to French colonial power in Algeria. Lastly, Karima Lahrach-Maynard delivered a comparative reading of the representations of Islam in France during the crusades of Saint Louis and the Egypt Expedition of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Following a workshop with a focus on the implications of recent developments in academic publishing for young researchers in Francophone postcolonial studies led by David Murphy, the study day concluded with a keynote address by Phil Dine (National University of Ireland, Galway). Addressing key historical periods and seminal colonial and postcolonial texts across a variety of genres and field, Dine considered their accumulative contribution to shaping North African subjectivity in its diversity and worldliness from pre-colonial times to the 'Arab Spring' protests.

JAMAL BAHMAD
UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

Society for Caribbean Studies Annual Conference

Warwick University, 3–5 July 2013

The annual conference of the Society for Caribbean Studies in the UK (SCS) took place this year at the University of Warwick. From the point of view of Francophone Postcolonial Studies, there was, to be frank, little of direct interest. Can a study of Joseph Zobel's migration letters be called 'postcolonial', given Martinique's current political status? There was some discussion of this point, but a few more scholars of the French-speaking part of the region would have helped the debate along enormously.

Other than this, there were two papers on Haiti, one on sex tourism and the other comparing the influence of the Haitian diaspora on US foreign policy with the better-known Cuban-American effect, but little else on the Francophone Caribbean. This is a shame, as the Francophone contribution could take a much higher profile in Caribbean Studies. There are frequent references to Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire in discussion of the postcolonial Anglophone Caribbean and a greater representation of scholars with expertise in this area could usefully inform the debate. Thus, for example, a closer look at the abstracts reveals a paper on Orlando Patterson's *The Children of Sisyphus* placed in the context of Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*, but this paper stood alone. There was a panel on Caribbean religions with papers on Obeah, Santaría and the Rastafarians, which could have greatly benefited from a contribution on the Haitian experience.

In the light of the relative absence of papers on the French-speaking Caribbean at this conference, I should like to encourage researchers working on this area to consider submitting an abstract for the conference next year in Glasgow. For instance, how has the current political status of Martinique and Guadeloupe affected their environment and development? There were papers which discussed ethnic identification and national ideology in Surinam and Guyana; a paper on Guyane would have made the discussion fascinating. The

contribution made by Francophone literature is out of all proportion to the size of the population and this deserves to be more widely acknowledged in critical debate.

The region is diverse linguistically and politically, but there is a shared history and many of the issues have a common origin. If we are not to replicate the linguistic divisions in our research, let us have more dialogue and enrich each other's study of the Caribbean.

STEVE CUSHION
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Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies

Contributions on any topic related to Francophone Postcolonial Studies are invited for inclusion in future issues. Authors should submit electronically two copies of their article, 4,000 words maximum, in English or French to a member of the editorial team. Articles should conform in presentation to the guidelines in the *MHRA Stylebook*, providing references in footnotes, rather than the author-date system. All articles submitted to the *BFPS* will be refereed by two scholars of international reputation, drawn from the advisory and editorial boards. To facilitate the anonymity of the refereeing process, authors are asked that their manuscript (other than the title page) contains no clue as to their identity. Book reviews (between 600 and 1000 words in length) and conference reports (500 words max.) should also be sent to the editorial team.

The deadline for the receipt of articles to be included in the spring 2014 issue is 31 January 2014.

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The SFPS logo, designed by Caomhán Ó Scolaí, is based on a Téké mask from the Upper Sanga region (Congo-Brazzaville).

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