

FPS

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Opinion Pieces

ACHAC (N. Bancel, P. Blanchard, S. Lemaire)

Irène Assiba d'Almeida

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Dominic Thomas

Reviews

J.P. Little

Jonathan Carr-West



**SOCIETY FOR FRANCOPHONE
POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES**

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**FRANCOPHONE
POSTCOLONIAL
STUDIES**

Francophone Postcolonial Studies

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Editorial: Why 'Francophone Postcolonial Studies'?

Since the 1980s, 'Francophone Studies' has become an increasingly popular specialism in academic institutions in the English-speaking world. The growing critical respect afforded to the cultural production of previously marginalised Francophone nations is, of course, to be celebrated. However, the increasing institutionalisation within French departments of Francophone Studies as a separate field of research to French Studies ironically risks reinforcing the centrality of 'white', metropolitan French culture, and presenting the 'French-speaking world' as peripheral and monolithic.

This journal sees the development of distinctive critical approaches to the study of Francophone cultural production as essential to defining a more integrated institutional role for Francophone Studies. Intrinsic to this process is the problematisation of the very term 'Francophone', which necessarily involves challenging and unpacking its frequently unacknowledged colonial/post-colonial dimension. Recent work in English and French-speaking universities (amongst others) has proved that postcolonial theory provides the most critically effective and constructive means for opening up new perspectives in the area of Francophone Studies. However, despite the impact of postcolonial theory on different academic disciplines over recent decades, the insight it can provide with regard to Francophone Studies has yet to be fully assessed. Equally, the contribution that French and Francophone Studies can make, and indeed have made, to a postcolonial theory largely perceived as Anglophone frequently remains unexplored.

By providing a forum for postcolonial perspectives, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* aims to promote theoretically driven, analytical studies of the Francophone world, which both question and reinvigorate the more established fields of French and Postcolonial Studies. The privileging of the postcolonial is in

no way intended to imply that Francophone cultural production will be approached according to a single theoretical framework. On the contrary, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* acknowledges the different theoretical trends within this multidisciplinary field, and believes that the complexity of postcolonial theory is best served by encouraging a variety of approaches. This theoretical complexity and multidisciplinaryity is, in turn, ideally suited to studying Francophone cultural production, which is frequently situated at the intersection of different historical, linguistic and social phenomena where synthesis is neither desirable nor possible.

As this first of two special issues of the journal demonstrates, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* envisages an approach that highlights a distinctive but reciprocal relationship between Francophone Studies and Postcolonial Studies. Contributors from Britain, Ireland, France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Africa and the US have been invited to write short, opinion pieces, laying out their vision of the issues facing the emerging field of Francophone Postcolonial Studies (we acknowledge our debt to Robert Young's *Interventions*, which carried out the same process in its first issue, although its 'postcolonial' focus was almost entirely Anglophone). The decision to publish a longer article by three scholars from the influential French colonial research group, ACHAC, as the first piece in this issue was motivated by a desire to highlight the centrality of the colonial legacy to an understanding of key aspects of contemporary French culture and society. Most of our contributors are academics working within French or Francophone Studies departments, but as the contribution by John McLeod illustrates, we are keen to promote active dialogue with postcolonial scholars in other language fields, stressing the need to examine the applicability of a predominantly Anglophone postcolonial theory to Francophone (and other) contexts. Above all, it is hoped that the journal will provide a consistent critical interrogation of the terms 'Francophone' and 'postcolonial', thus

helping to push back the boundaries of the spaces (geographical, historical, gendered) with which they are so often associated.

Finally, we would like to invite contributions on any topic related to Francophone Postcolonial Studies for inclusion in future issues (beginning with issue 1.1 in 2004). Suggestions for themed issues to be co-ordinated by guest editors are also welcome. Authors should submit two copies of their article, of 6,000 words maximum, in English or in French, to a member of the editorial team (full contact details are given below). 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 *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* will be refereed by two scholars of international reputation, drawn from our advisory and editorial boards. To facilitate the anonymity of the refereeing process, authors are asked to ensure that the manuscript (other than the title page) contains no clue as to their identity. The editorial team will endeavour to inform contributors of the decision regarding the publication of their articles within 12-15 weeks of receiving the piece. Book reviews, conference reports (700-800 words max.), calls for papers, should also be sent to the editorial team.

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De la mémoire coloniale à l'histoire

En France, parler de la *Mémoire*, c'est toucher à une valeur civique essentielle,¹ marquée par la mauvaise conscience, les commémorations, mais aussi les manipulations.² De fait, l'*histoire parfaite* n'existe pas,³ et la *mémoire parfaite* non plus. Mais, si l'écriture de l'histoire peut être corrigée, recontextualisée et reformulée, la mémoire est, dès l'instant où elle s'énonce, source d'imaginaires, de prises de conscience et de conflits, elle devient immédiatement un enjeu social et politique. Elle laisse des traces, immédiates, indélébiles, incorporées dans l'imaginaire social.⁴ C'est donc une question à prendre avec précaution et beaucoup de recul.

Or, lorsqu'il s'agit de la période coloniale, cela est sans doute encore plus difficile car, la 'Mémoire coloniale' en France pose des questions complexes, et, plus que Vichy (qui reste un 'malaise de notre histoire', voire un accident autoritaire que la République peut évacuer puisque Vichy abroge précisément la République), la colonisation est un 'véritable trou de mémoire' sur les deux derniers siècles.⁵ Trois approches peuvent être proposées pour comprendre cette amnésie. D'une part, l'analyse de cette mémoire

¹ Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Les Assassins de la mémoire* (Paris: La Découverte, 1987).

² Comme l'ont très bien montré Jean-Clément Martin et Charles Suaud en insistant sur l'instrumentalisation de la mémoire comme arme politique dans 'Le Puy-du-Fou: l'interminable réinvention du passé vendéen', *Actes de la recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 93 (juin 1992), 21-37.

³ Georges Huppert, *L'Idée de l'histoire parfaite* (Paris: Flammarion, 1973).

⁴ Daniel Lindenberg, 'Guerres de mémoire en France', *Vingtième Siècle* (avril 1994), 77-95.

⁵ Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l'Oubli* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991). Ouvrage fondateur sur la question de la mémoire coloniale, à relire à l'aune de son interview 'Cicatriser l'Algérie' dans un numéro spécial d'*Autrement* (*Oublier nos crimes. L'amnésie nationale: une spécificité française?*), 144 (avril 1994), 227-43.

nous contraint à penser les rapports entre histoire et mémoire, autrement dit à comparer l'état des savoirs sur une question — ici, le passé colonial —, et les formes de socialisation que ces savoirs empruntent pour se diffuser. D'autre part, et parce que la mémoire coloniale est particulièrement sujette à l'occultation, la fragmentation et la mythification, son étude nous interroge sur les conditions de possibilités de la construction d'une mémoire coloniale et ses obstacles. Enfin, l'historiographie elle-même est le fruit d'un processus où convergent avancées scientifiques, modes intellectuelles, coups médiatiques, concurrences académiques, déterminant la forme et le dynamisme de l'édification des connaissances sur l'histoire coloniale. D'une certaine manière, l'histoire coloniale française est en quête de *paxtonisation*,⁶ comme si seul, hors de France, pouvait enfin s'ouvrir de façon claire un débat bloqué depuis 40 ans: oui, la France a colonisé!

Ce contexte, qui est autant de questions posées lorsque l'on s'attache à décrire l'état des lieux de la *mémoire coloniale*, forme les motifs d'une trame plus générale qui nous oblige à faire la généalogie de la formation de cette même mémoire (ou des *mémoires*⁷), pour en cerner les conjonctures essentielles. Revenir sur la construction, dans la longue durée, de la mémoire coloniale a donc pour objet de comprendre comment ces conjonctures et les métamorphoses de la perception de la colonisation ont des répercussions jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Comment, aussi, elles résonnent encore dans le corps social et sont ainsi parties

⁶ Par référence à l'ouvrage de l'Américain Robert Paxton, *La France de Vichy* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), qui a provoqué une véritable révolution historiographique et ouvert une fois pour toute la vieille blessure narcissique franco-française sur la période vichyste.

⁷ Si l'on s'attache aux *mémoires* des acteurs de cette histoire, il convient d'insister comme le souligne Benjamin Stora dans 'Cicatriser l'Algérie' sur la notion de vérité: 'Car entreprendre de dire la vérité sur les mémoires, ce n'est assurément pas admettre que les mémoires disent la vérité, mais c'est à tout le moins postuler que les mémoires sont porteuses de sens, jusque dans la sélection et la déformation qui font d'elles des mémoires.'

prenantes des problèmes actuels de l'édification d'une mémoire nationale en France.

QU'EST-CE QUE LA MÉMOIRE COLONIALE?

Comment la sonder et quels sont les indices diffractés dans la culture qui — aujourd'hui — nous permettraient de l'évaluer ? Quelle est la part de fabulation, de mythe, d'interdit, de réécriture et de ré-interprétation permanente dans la construction de la mémoire ?⁸ Car la mémoire n'est pas l'histoire. Le cas de la mémoire coloniale est particulièrement éclairant dans la mesure où les savoirs accumulés depuis plus de quarante ans sur la colonisation et le colonialisme ne font que peu l'objet d'un travail de socialisation et n'ont donc qu'un impact très limité sur la construction d'un savoir collectif.

Mais il y a sans doute plus difficile encore, au-delà d'un travail de deuil qui se joue en partie dans le refoulement de ce 'passé qui ne passe pas'.⁹ C'est que cette socialisation d'une mémoire coloniale dépend pourtant, autant du travail des historiens, de celui des institutions qui pourraient véhiculer ces savoirs et des différentes médiations à même de transmettre la mémoire de la colonisation (reportages télévisuels, émissions de radio, numéros spéciaux dans la presse et les revues, expositions, etc.) que des conditions de réception de la société elle-même, dans sa complexité. La mémoire historique renvoie en effet aux racines, aux fondements imaginaires de la communauté qui l'élabore.¹⁰ Ces fondements imaginaires représentent une force d'inertie et une

puissance de cohésion remodelée en permanence par les apports, les 'ajouts' de mémoire qui viennent la reconfigurer.

En ce sens, la mémoire réécrit l'histoire, l'adapte, la conforme à ses propres possibilités de réception. Tout savoir historique est donc implacablement soumis à ce travail de (ré)interprétation qui, seul, permet de rendre audible et d'incorporer, en les transformant, de nouveaux savoirs. Le cas de la mémoire coloniale est à cet égard exemplaire de même d'ailleurs que celui de l'immigration. Depuis quarante ans, nous l'avons dit, les historiens ont fait leur travail. Les archives se sont ouvertes. Des associations diverses (antiracistes, Ligue de l'enseignement ou mouvements des droits de l'Homme) ont milité pour la reconnaissance de l'histoire coloniale comme une page essentielle de notre histoire collective, en prenant souvent appui sur les aspects les plus violents de la colonisation, à l'image de la torture en Algérie. Des livres, sites et articles ont été produits, mais peu de grands documentaires sur la colonisation dans son ensemble ont été réalisés excepté sur l'Algérie en guerre.¹¹ Des manifestations symboliques ont été organisées cependant, l'échec de ces tentatives — dont nous pouvons parler d'autant plus facilement que la critique s'adresse d'abord à nous-mêmes à travers nos programmes d'expositions et de colloques : *Images et Colonies*, *De l'indigène à l'immigré*, *Miroirs d'Empires*, *L'Appel à l'Afrique* — est aujourd'hui avéré. Mais ne parlons pas d'un silence des sources ou des savoirs, ceux qui voulaient savoir savaient, comme l'écrit avec précision Alain Ruscio.¹²

Ceci nous renvoie à une configuration dans laquelle l'histoire coloniale est encore inaudible, inassumable. Cette impossibilité à la faire surgir tient donc probablement à deux facteurs essentiels. D'une part, le simple travail du temps, ce fameux 'travail de deuil'

⁸ Et même de *reconstructions* ou d'*inventions* comme le souligne Bernard Lewis dans, *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁹ Eric Conan et Henry Rousso, *Vichy un passé qui ne passe pas* (Paris: Fayard, 1994).

¹⁰ Voir *Autrement*, 144 (avril 1994).

¹¹ Dans 'Guerres de mémoire en France', Daniel Lindenberg, souligne d'ailleurs le rôle essentiel des médias : 'le cinéma et la télévision deviennent des véhicules privilégiés de la mémoire collective'.

¹² Alain Ruscio, 'Y'a bon les colonies', *Autrement*, 144 (avril 1994).

qui s'opère sur une ou deux générations, n'a pas véritablement commencé. Vichy est à cet égard un exemple très intéressant puisqu'il a fallu près de cinquante ans avant que la mémoire de Vichy soit partiellement démystifiée et socialisée. Ce temps doit aussi opérer son travail sur la mémoire de la colonisation et du colonialisme.

D'autre part, l'histoire coloniale remet en question de nombreux référents identitaires qui forment l'imaginaire social. C'est leur remise en question qui pose problème, car elle nécessite une (re)fondation, une (re)formulation de ces mêmes référents, et simultanément impose une réécriture de l'histoire pour rendre compatible l'incorporation de la mémoire coloniale à l'imaginaire social. La construction de la mémoire est donc une opération dialectique d'où l'histoire ne sort jamais immaculée.¹³

L'amnésie coloniale laisse ainsi le champ libre à la mythification et à une 'nostalgie coloniale' qui s'appuient sur les représentations collectives construites pendant la colonisation. Ainsi, le premier de ces pièges d'une volonté d'édifier une mémoire coloniale est de légitimer une nostalgie 'coloniale' toujours vivante. Prenons l'exemple des années 1990. En premier lieu, dans l'espace du politique, comme en témoigne le projet d'un musée de l'Outre-France,¹⁴ les déclarations de Jean-Marie Le Pen souhaitant 'réhabiliter à travers l'évocation de l'Algérie française ce que fut la France impériale'. Il en est de même dans le monde intellectuel ou de la recherche, avec par exemple Arthur Comte, ancien ministre de l'information sous Pompidou qui, depuis des années nous abreuve de ses 'nostalgies' françaises avec ses ouvrages sur la grandeur coloniale de la France (dont *L'Épopée coloniale de la France*, 1993), ou des numéros spéciaux de revues comme en 1993

¹³ Voir par exemple pour la Shoah le scandale qu'a provoqué — tel était d'ailleurs son but — le dernier livre de Norman G. Finkelstein, *L'Industrie de l'Holocauste* (Paris: La Fabrique Éditions, 2001).

¹⁴ Projet organisé sous l'égide de la municipalité de Marseille, du secrétariat d'État aux Anciens combattants et des réseaux de rapatriés.

L'Aventure coloniale, sous l'égide de l'incontournable 'révisionniste colonial' Bernard Lugan.¹⁵ De même des articles dans la presse s'en font l'écho à l'image du *Figaro magazine*, sous la plume de Guy Sorman, sous le titre 'Rwanda: faut-il recoloniser l'Afrique' le 6 août 1994 ou *Libération* avec Paul Johnson, le 29 août 1994, avec un article pour le moins contestable sous le titre trompeur 'Les nouveaux habits du colonialisme'.¹⁶ Ce puissant retour nostalgique n'est donc pas une simple hypothèse d'école, il est rendu possible par le silence enveloppant l'histoire coloniale.

Le second des pièges est de ne pas tenir compte de cette dialectique complexe qui accompagne ce passé, et d'en faire un espace de repentance ou de commémoration sur les 'crimes' de la République.

UNE IDÉOLOGIE RÉPUBLICAINE-COLONIALE?

Ceci étant posé, il faut saisir ce que la mémoire coloniale remet en question dans nos référents identitaires et en quoi ces derniers font obstacle au travail de mémoire. Le premier étant, nous semble-t-il, la République, plus précisément les valeurs et l'idéologie sur lesquelles elle repose.

¹⁵ Bernard Lugan, *Bilan de la décolonisation*, que nous dénoncions en 1994 dans *Libération* sous le titre 'Au secours le colonialisme revient'. Quelques années plus tôt, s'appuyant sur un article de Jean-Claude Chesnais de l'INED, *Colonisation: l'heure des bilans*, la revue *L'Histoire* (octobre 1987) titrait en première page, 'Les "bienfaits" de la colonisation'.

¹⁶ L'article de Paul Johnson après une suite d'erreurs historiques et de raccourcis pour le moins fantaisistes destinés à appuyer sa conclusion, n'hésitait pas à affirmer que le devoir moral des occidentaux (du 'monde civilisé'), devant ces 'États [qui] ne disposent pas du degré de maturité suffisant pour se gouverner seuls' était de 'porter secours à ces contrées déshéritées en partant les gouverner'. Il se place ainsi dans le prolongement du discours du journaliste américain William Pfaf qui dans le *Herald Tribune*, le 24 avril 1990 en appelait déjà à la 'recolonisation internationale de l'Afrique'.

En effet, l'idéal colonial, formulé dès le début des années 1880 comme une utopie civilisatrice (la 'mission civilisatrice'), s'inscrit en profondeur dans le registre des universaux prêchés par la République. De fait, tout au long de la lente construction de l'État (et non de la Nation), du rattachement du Languedoc à l'annexion de la Savoie, en passant par la Corse, l'espace français est en perpétuel mouvement. En même temps, s'est affirmé un système de valeurs, que la République fera, ou pas, siennes (de Clovis à Saint-Louis, de Jeanne d'Arc à Napoléon) et qui sera le substrat de l'identité nationale. Cette apologie de la conquête, des âmes, des cœurs et des terres, ne peut qu'être mis en parallèle de l'expansionnisme colonial à venir et amorce la mission civilisatrice en gestation. La généalogie du discours colonial d'État — où se mêle habilement le colonial comme prolongement du national et condition de sa puissance —, ne quittera plus jusqu'aux indépendances, le registre de la nécessaire diffusion des 'Lumières' de la République à des peuples perçus comme inférieurs biologiquement et culturellement. Pour beaucoup, la France ne sera la France que lorsqu'elle aura parachevé son œuvre d'uniformisation des citoyens (quelque soit leur couleur) et du territoire (à l'image de l'Algérie devenue départements français). L'hexagone n'est, et ne reste, qu'une suite de conquêtes (coloniales ou non), dès lors la notion d'Empire devient efficace dans une Plus Grande France qui fait alors exploser les schémas classiques de l'identité nationale à travers le concept d'assimilation. Territoires coloniaux et marches régionales s'inscrivent dans le même processus d'absorption par la nation, l'important étant alors de 'rendre français'. La colonisation 'Outre-mer' n'est donc pas en rupture avec le passé, elle s'inscrit au contraire dans un *continuum* consubstantiel à la construction de la nation française puis, par héritage, à la République.

Cette genèse républicaine de l'idéologie coloniale d'État nous amène donc à une première interrogation sur la mémoire coloniale

en France: sonder la colonisation et l'histoire coloniale, n'est-ce pas remettre en perspective les fondements d'une idéologie politique hexagonale dominante, à savoir l'idéologie républicaine? N'est-ce pas dans l'implication totale de la République (quelles que soient par ailleurs les couleurs politiques dont elle est revêtue), d'abord dans les conquêtes elles-mêmes, puis dans la stabilisation de l'Empire et, enfin, dans la prise en charge d'une active propagande coloniale d'État à partir de la fin des années 1920,¹⁷ qu'il faut voir l'un des principaux obstacles à l'assimilation d'une mémoire coloniale en France aujourd'hui? Car aborder la colonisation, c'est nécessairement déconstruire les discours qui l'ont rendu possible et au premier chef le discours républicain-colonial qui constitue aujourd'hui l'un des référents identitaire et politique les plus ancrés dans l'imaginaire collectif, vigoureusement véhiculé par la dernière institution républicaine censée souder le corps social, à savoir l'École, par laquelle devrait se transmettre la mémoire de la colonisation.

Second processus qui rend la mémoire coloniale encore *inassumable*, la fusion du colonial avec le national. La nouvelle configuration politique après la Grande Guerre permet en effet la consolidation d'un consensus colonial, porté par la majorité des partis et — surtout — par le déploiement de la machine de la propagande d'État.¹⁸ Les républicains se retrouvent donc objectivement aux côtés de la droite dans la promotion de l'idée impériale comme nouvel horizon de la nation. L'idée d'une fusion entre le national et le colonial s'impose alors mais elle n'est bien sûr valable que pour les terres et non pour les hommes. En effet, dans les colonies, le système de discriminations imposé dès

¹⁷ Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, Laurent Gervereau, eds, *Images et Colonies (1880-1962)*; Bdic-Achac ainsi que Sandrine Lemaire, *L'Agence économique des colonies, instrument de propagande ou creuset de l'idéologie coloniale en France?* (Florence: Institut Universitaire Européen, 2000).

¹⁸ Voir la récente thèse de Sandrine Lemaire, citée ci-dessus, *L'Agence économique des colonies*.

l'origine aux populations coloniales (discrimination politique et juridique, sans parler de l'appropriation de l'essentiel des richesses) persiste, puisqu'il est la condition du maintien de la domination de la métropole. La France produit alors, au nom des valeurs universelles, de la République et de ses idéaux, du national, donc de l'exclusion. Ce mouvement, qui ne commence réellement à se fissurer qu'à partir des répercussions en métropole de la guerre d'Algérie,¹⁹ soit en 1956-57, peut être analysé comme une cause supplémentaire de la difficulté à assumer le passé colonial.

Après la décolonisation de l'Algérie, il s'est en effet produit une fracture — celle de l'oubli — et les colonies qui échappaient au contrôle direct de la métropole apparaissaient de nouveau comme des contrées exotiques sans lien avec l'ex-puissance tutélaire. Sans doute parce que le double discours de la métropole était inassumable: faire croire que 'là-bas' était comme 'ici', ou en passe de le devenir —, leitmotiv constant de la propagande coloniale — devenait soudain absurde, incompréhensible devant la volonté enfin palpable des colonisés de se séparer de la métropole. La propagande a donc montré une image de l'*utopie républicaine*: conflits de classes inexistant, coopération de tous à un même idéal de progrès (économique, social, culturel, civilisateur), une métaphore de l'harmonie, d'une société sans conflits, d'une communauté ayant résolu ses divergences, ses inquiétudes identitaires et les angoisses liées aux transformations sociales et techniques.

Car la colonisation, ou plutôt ce que les Français en ont vu, était un miroir renvoyant l'image de leurs désirs, pas seulement une prétention à la puissance, pas seulement une fierté cocardière, mais celle d'eux-mêmes projetés dans la douce utopie coloniale. Lorsque ce miroir s'est brisé, c'est l'utopie qui s'est effondrée et

¹⁹ Le moment où les Français prennent conscience que l'*Algérie française* n'est qu'un slogan idéologique, une utopie.

donc la part de rêve et de projection de ce qu'aurait pu être la métropole.

DE LA RUPTURE À L'OUBLI...

La déficience de la mémoire coloniale aujourd'hui peut se mesurer à l'aune de l'affaire Aussarresses. Réactions d'effarements, de protestations de dignité contre l'apologie de la torture en Algérie. Doit-on rappeler que les mêmes réactions — sur un débat qui a déjà été tranché depuis longtemps par les historiens: oui, la torture en Algérie fut une pratique systématique de l'armée dès 1955²⁰ — ont été énoncées dès 1956 et ce jusqu'à la fin de la guerre d'Algérie, à travers des centaines de témoignages et d'articles parus dans différents périodiques tels *Témoignage Chrétien*, *Les Temps Modernes*, *Esprit*, *L'Express*, *Le Monde*. Doit-on souligner aussi que des réactions semblables sont ensuite apparues en 1981 à l'occasion du témoignage d'un bourreau et que, vingt ans plus tard et de nouveau, la même surprise se fait jour — avec une médiatisation du problème comparable aux années 1957-58 —, le même effarement, la même virginité dans l'incompréhension d'un phénomène qui, avant que d'être guerrier, est d'abord colonial. Une sorte de pratique 'normale' dans un système 'anormal'. Pourtant, à s'arrêter exclusivement sur la guerre (et ses crimes) on en oublie le système (et ses mécanismes).²¹ À ce niveau, le devoir de mémoire,

²⁰ Voir Pascal Blanchard, Sandrine Lemaire et Nicolas Bancel 'Les impasses du débat sur la torture en Algérie: Une histoire coloniale refoulée', *le Monde diplomatique*, juin 2001.

²¹ Voir Alain Gresh, 'Inventer une mémoire commune', *Manière de Voir* (juillet-août 2001): 'Cette représentation [de l'inhumanité de l'Autre colonisé] permet à l'Occident de justifier sa domination et son incroyable brutalité. Ainsi prend sens l'usage de la torture durant la guerre d'Algérie. Elle ne fut nullement un "accident", un "excès" une "bavure" due aux circonstances exceptionnelles de la guerre et couverte par des autorités politiques trop lâches ou trop aveugles. Elle fut consubstantielle de la

concentré sur la Guerre d'Algérie, se transforme, involontairement, en un déni de savoir.

Cette stupeur est pourtant un très bon analyseur de l'état de la mémoire coloniale en France. Elle ne peut être expliquée que par l'absence de médiations culturelles qui, après les indépendances et jusqu'à aujourd'hui, auraient permis de socialiser une mémoire coloniale. 'On doit donc, pour comprendre cette nouvelle occasion manquée, analyser pourquoi l'histoire et la mémoire coloniale restent aujourd'hui un point aveugle de notre inconscient collectif et pourquoi, alors que l'histoire de l'Algérie coloniale est la plus exemplaire', cette histoire fait obstacle précisément à cette analyse. À cet égard, nous le pensons, le débat sur la torture apparaît comme un masque qui nous empêche de penser le colonial en profondeur.²² Plusieurs signes témoignent de cette occultation. Les manuels scolaires, par exemple, accordent une place très marginale au phénomène colonial,²³ et celui-ci n'est *jamais* envisagé du point de vue de ses répercussions culturelles et politiques en métropole.²⁴ Or, c'est bien de ce double point de vue qu'il est nécessaire d'envisager l'histoire coloniale — les conséquences dans

colonisation, dès ses origines, [...] prolonger le débat sur la torture nécessite donc de penser la colonisation.'

²² Voir Blanchard, Lemaire et Bancel, 'Les impasses du débat sur la torture en Algérie'.

²³ Voir Sandrine Lemaire, 'Les politiques de l'Éducation nationale face à la colonisation et à l'immigration', intervention au colloque *De l'indigène à l'immigré*, Lille, 1997; E. Davidenkoff, 'La torture, sans commentaires: Les manuels scolaires français traitent la guerre d'Algérie avec ambiguïté', *Libération*, 5 décembre 2000.

²⁴ Voir Sandrine Lemaire, 'De la bonne manière d'être citoyen: colonisation/immigration dans les instructions officielles et les manuels scolaires d'histoire-géographie', *Passerelles*, 16 (printemps 1998); ainsi que l'article de Maurice T. Maschino, 'L'histoire expurgée de la guerre d'Algérie', *Le Monde diplomatique*, février 2001.

les colonies et la formation d'une culture coloniale en métropole²⁵ — si l'on souhaite que les élèves comprennent cette page essentielle de l'histoire.

Or la crise de l'histoire coloniale a commencé dès le début des années 1970 et n'en est pas sortie depuis 30 ans. Pour Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch,²⁶ elle est liée à la 'discipline' et à ses références classiques, ainsi qu'à la profonde césure entre l'histoire occidentale (en mouvement) et celle des pays du tiers-monde (émergente). En fait, l'histoire de la colonisation (et du colonialisme en tant que système) est née avec les indépendances — dans la passion —, pour presque aussitôt s'éteindre. Cela ne veut pas dire que la production universitaire n'ait pas suivi,²⁷ bien au contraire. Mais elle n'a pas su, ou n'a pas pu, sortir du cadre étroit qui était le sien et elle s'est, pour ainsi dire, marginalisée et ghettoïsée...

Avec dix ans de distance, nous ne pouvons que constater que le souhait de Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch de voir 'l'histoire coloniale [...] enfin quasi-décolonisée', n'a pas résolu le problème de la socialisation de la mémoire coloniale. En effet, si elle s'est décolonisée, c'est pour mieux se marginaliser entre deux tendances contradictoires: légitimation *a posteriori* de l'engagement tiers-mondiste d'alors et rejet de toute critique en bloc de la colonisation (sous le prétexte que le colonialisme et la colonisation, notamment la 'colonisation à la française', ne peuvent être mélangés).

²⁵ Voir à ce sujet le premier tome d'une trilogie dirigée par Pascal Blanchard et Sandrine Lemaire, *Culture coloniale: La France conquise par son Empire (1870-1931)* (Paris: Autrement, 2003).

²⁶ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'Histoire coloniale et décolonisation', *Cahiers du Gemdev* (juin 1991).

²⁷ Il suffit de citer, pour les francophones uniquement, Suret-Canale, Ki-Zerbo, Berque, Robinson, Gallissot, Ballandier, Rey-Goldzeiguer, Ageron, Girardet, Ganiage, et même Bourdieu ou, plus tard, Copans, Liauzu, Ayache, Rioux, Meynier, Coquery-Vidrovitch, Marseille, Thobie, Hémerly, Copans, Diouf, Mbembé, Mbokolo, etc.

La mémoire de la colonisation a pourtant des effets directs et bien réels sur l'histoire post-coloniale en France. Ainsi, à l'aube des années 1980, la crise économique, la sédentarisation d'une partie des immigrés, la crispation du modèle d'intégration républicain, l'essor de l'ultra-nationalisme et le rejet d'une immigration d'origine africaine, dans le contexte d'une histoire coloniale non assumée, favorise l'émergence d'une double image de référence de l'Autre: celle de l'*étranger-type* — potentiellement assimilable — et celle de l'*immigré-type* — prolongement de l'image coloniale de l'*indigène-type*. Cette double représentation de l'Autre vient supplanter l'image du *travailleur-immigré* des années 1970 et s'impose comme référence, implicite ou explicite, dans le débat sur l'immigration. L'*immigré-type* est alors caractérisé par ses différences culturelles, parfois 'raciales', à travers la réapparition des stéréotypes d'hier, renforcés par la banalisation d'un discours xénophobe. Différent des Français, il diffère aussi des autres populations étrangères. Et, c'est cette différence réifiée qui va devenir le symbole de l'impossible intégration de certaines populations, issues de l'ex-Empire colonial, car la mémoire coloniale est comme bloquée pour servir de 'champ de compréhension' à ces phénomènes. Comme si, l'immigré ex-colonisé était moins lié à notre histoire que tout autre étranger arrivant en France.

Peut-être pouvons-nous pointer une dernière difficulté, une troisième résistance à la socialisation de l'histoire coloniale en France. L'École est l'institution qui est devenue la seule dépositaire de la politique d'intégration des populations immigrées. Ce n'est pas un jugement, mais un fait. Or, ces populations, depuis le milieu des années 1950, proviennent en grande majorité de l'ex-empire colonial.²⁸ Elles partagent donc une histoire commune avec

²⁸ Voir Gérard Noiriel, *Le Creuset français* (Paris: Seuil, 1996).

la France or c'est précisément cette histoire qui est la moins enseignée à l'École de la République,²⁹ ou de façon tellement factuelle, qu'elle en perd toute valeur exemplaire ou systémique.

Deux explications peuvent être avancées. La première tient au fait que la politique d'*intégration républicaine*, fille de la politique d'assimilation de la Troisième République, propose un modèle où les particularismes culturels — et bien entendu religieux — doivent s'effacer au profit de l'intégration des universaux républicains (*anti-multiculturalisme*).³⁰ Affronter leur remise en question à travers une histoire où la République a trahi ses valeurs, et s'adresser aux enfants des principales victimes de cette trahison, est confusément ressentie comme une menace: la remise en cause radicale des fondements des valeurs de l'école elle-même, dont les conséquences peuvent être la crispation identitaire et le rejet du modèle républicain. Cependant, en refusant à ces nouvelles générations la compréhension de leur propre histoire, on leur refuse leurs racines et la généalogie de ce qui constitue souvent leur double culture. Ce déracinement de la mémoire provoque évidemment ces cristallisations identitaires tant redoutées, à travers la création ex-nihilo de nouvelles sociabilités, de nouveaux modes d'expression culturelle qui s'opposent à un monde perçu comme hostile. Les limites du refoulement historique sont atteintes, comme celles du modèle d'intégration républicaine, les banlieues en sont la plus visible et brutale expression.

Ceci nous amène tout naturellement à un autre point aveugle, également héritage d'une mémoire coloniale non assumée: les

²⁹ Nous renvoyons à ce sujet au débat qui a suivi notre article et dossier intitulé 'Le colonialisme, un anneau dans le nez de la République', dans la revue *Hommes et Migrations*, 1228, numéro spécial sur *L'héritage colonial. Un trou de mémoire* (novembre-décembre 2000).

³⁰ Sur ce débat voir Pierre-André Taguieff, 'La confluence des fatalismes: emprise globalitaire, dérives identitaires', *Les Temps modernes*, 613 (mars-mai 2001), 131-57; Andrea Semprini, *Le Multiculturalisme* (Paris: PUF, 1997), ou Fred Constant, *Le Multiculturalisme* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000).

relations intercommunautaires. Celles-ci procèdent largement des représentations de l'Autre colonisé, tissées pendant plus d'un siècle d'histoire coloniale.³¹ N'hésitons pas à le dire, les représentations discriminantes des populations immigrées ont un fondement colonial.³² Socialiser l'histoire coloniale permettrait donc de comprendre et de déconstruire les fondements de cet imaginaire et par conséquent de le dévitaliser. Mais c'est précisément parce qu'il est difficile d'admettre que la France a produit — comme les autres métropoles coloniales — un imaginaire discriminant au cœur de la République, que le problème n'est pratiquement jamais abordé sous cet angle.

Autre signe d'une mémoire coloniale défaillante, l'absence de toute reconnaissance muséographique. De même, le chercheur est contraint d'étudier des archives cantonnées en province — car l'État, sans en interdire l'accès, et malgré le dynamisme des équipes en place, fournit des moyens financiers tellement ridicules qu'ils en deviennent symboliques³³ —, ou d'attendre que les

³¹ Voir, comme contre-exemple, l'histoire de l'immigration dans Paris avec notamment l'ouvrage fondateur sur cette question *Le Paris des étrangers* ainsi que l'ouvrage de Pascal Blanchard, Éric Deroo et Gilles Manceron, *Le Paris noir, 1878-1998* (Paris: Hazan, 2002).

³² Pascal Blanchard et Nicolas Bancel, *De l'indigène à l'immigré* (Paris: Gallimard Découvertes, 2002 [1998]).

³³ Le problème de l'ouverture des archives sur la colonisation n'est pas politique. Non, il est ailleurs, plus subtil, plus structurel, plus mécanique: l'absence de moyens. Des Archives nationales d'Outre-mer déplacées à Aix-en-Provence (césure symbolique entre deux histoires parallèles bien différentes), qui malgré un personnel et des directions successives volontaristes (expositions, revues, publications) sont considérés comme les parents pauvres de la mémoire nationale. Dès lors, ce n'est pas la dérogation qui manque c'est la potentialité technique de mise à disposition d'un fonds (moyen de consultation/reproduction, archives classées, répertoire). De même le problème des fonds iconographiques est sans conteste scandaleux considérant l'état d'abandon de certaines collections, les moyens dérisoires d'achats (90% des affiches et photographies quittent aujourd'hui le territoire national) et l'absence de politique globale (instituts de recherches pluridisciplinaires, base images numérisées, lieu de dépôt centralisé).

maigres postes 'spécialisés' sur la question coloniale (Université et CNRS) se multiplient enfin.³⁴

On se retrouve donc avec un trou de mémoire béant qui devient plus prégnant lorsque le débat se transpose au niveau du politique. En effet, à la différence de la dénonciation de l'antisémitisme par exemple où la République peut, de manière plus aisée, mettre en exergue dans l'histoire récente les tenants d'une telle idéologie, elle ne peut le faire dans le cadre du *différencialisme* colonial, puisqu'elle est au cœur du système. Un pays sans 'hommes de savoir', sans 'lieux de savoir' et sans 'espaces de conservation du savoir', ne peut prétendre être capable d'appréhender ce long voyage de la mémoire qu'est notre introspection coloniale à venir. Ainsi, la quasi totalité des acteurs sociaux, des partis politiques traditionnels, des structures éducatives et des mouvements antiracistes ont accepté, de fait, la marginalisation du problème colonial. Or cette *automutilation* volontaire aurait pu et pourrait parfaitement fonctionner si l'observation de l'actualité française n'était pas marquée par les séquelles de la colonisation et de la décolonisation notamment par la stigmatisation de certains immigrés.

L'omniprésence de ce passé est pourtant inéluctable et la République risque, après avoir autrefois perdu son âme aux colonies, d'y perdre aujourd'hui davantage, ses valeurs. Pour la nouvelle génération immigrée des ex-colonies, c'est de 'la promesse de l'intégration impossible à tenir que sont nées des discriminations frontales ou douces [...] il convient (par conséquent) d'inventer de nouvelles manières d'être ensemble qui n'ont plus rien à voir avec une intégration devenue un leurre'.³⁵ En ouvrant le débat sur la mémoire coloniale, on interroge

³⁴ Voir le récent article de Aïssa Kadri, Claude Liauzu, André Mandouze, André Nouschi, Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer et Pierre Vidal-Naquet, 'Les historiens et la guerre d'Algérie' qui montre que le système en place décourage 'les jeunes chercheurs de se tourner vers l'histoire coloniale', *Le Monde*, 10 juin 2001.

³⁵ Article de Nacira Guénif-Souilamas dans *Libération* du 12 juillet 2001.

l'intégration, la citoyenneté et les valeurs de la République. L'enjeu est de taille: il est national.

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A Necessary Uneasiness

I welcome the launching of *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, as this new journal will certainly fill an obvious gap among professional periodicals. The 'Francophone' literary criticism I specialize in examines the work of writers from French-speaking Africa and using the French language as the vehicle of their art. The existence of this 'Francophone' literature is real and important, though in the English-speaking world, that reality is often neglected or erased. Thus a recent book, *Postcolonial Literatures: Expanding the Canon*, addressed the question of 'post-colonial' literatures as if it were exclusively English-speaking, in a context of 'Commonwealth Literature' and 'World Literature in English'.¹ Reflecting on such an approach one understands the stated goal of *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* which seeks to 'examine the applicability of a predominantly Anglophone postcolonial theory to Francophone contexts'.

That approach is also why I — and particularly since I come from that part of the world — fully understand the weight of the terms 'Francophone' and 'postcolonial.' Indeed those terms describe real historical situations which were important in the past and which are still relevant and even crucial, especially in the case of French-speaking Africa where France still intervenes, politically, economically, militarily and otherwise:

Allez-vous-en de chez nous
Nous ne voulons plus d'indépendance
Sous haute surveillance...²

¹ Deborah Madson, *Postcolonial Literatures: Expanding the Canon* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), p.1.

² Witness the recent events in Côte d'Ivoire and contrast with Alpha Blondy's song, 'Armée Française' quoted here.

Therefore, I acknowledge the terms of the new journal's title, recognizing that it refers to a reality that is, at this point in history, inescapable.

At the same time however, and to be honest, I must express a taxonomic uneasiness regarding the specific terms we use to define our area of study namely, 'Francophone' and 'postcolonial.' This taxonomic uneasiness is shared by many African critics, from Guy Ossito Midiohouan to Ambroise Kom, to name two of the most virulent critics of 'francophonie' as a political institution grounded on language politics but expanding far beyond the linguistic realm.³ Indeed, the adjective 'Francophone' cannot be dissociated from the noun 'Francophonie' and, as such, must be problematized in terms of its peculiar history. This concept has over the years come to be ideologically charged; more and more Africans have grown uncomfortable with, and even suspicious of Francophonie, for that political institution can be used — and has been used — to suit hegemonic purposes.

There are, of course, many reasons why one should take a cautionary stance toward the term 'Francophone'. It lumps together vastly different countries under the banner of the French language, running the risk of homogenizing them and erasing their cultural specificity. It creates false dichotomies and divisions in the continent, along the lines of imported, colonial languages. It erases African languages and African-language literatures and, it is oblivious to the fact that speaking French is a partial activity for most Africans; it is intermittent or even non-existent for many

³ Guy Ossito Midiohouan, *Du bon usage de la francophonie: Essai sur l'idéologie francophone* (Porto-Novo, Benin: Éditions CNPMS, 1994); Ambroise Kom, *La Malédiction francophone: Défis culturels et condition postcoloniale* (Hamburg and Yaoundé: LIT/CLE, 2000). See also *La Culture française vue d'ici et d'ailleurs* (Paris: Karthala, 2002), edited by Thomas C. Spear, and in which several critics reflect on what 'Francophone' means to them.

others. In addition, semantically, the term Francophone, which simply means 'French-speaking', is not fully appropriate to describe writing.

The same cautionary attitude should apply when it comes to the term post(-) colonial/ism (hyphenated or not) which has already elicited considerable scrutiny and criticism. *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) as well as the special issue of *Callaloo* on post-colonial discourses (1993) immediately come to mind but numerous scholars, including Biodun Jeyifo, Bart Moore-Gilbert and Ella Shohat among many others, have called into question the appropriateness of such terminology.⁴ Here again, a cautionary bell must be sounded for a variety of reasons. It is true that the concept of the postcolonial, has contained, from its inception in literary and cultural theory, seeds of subversion and of resistance. However, what I find particularly disturbing at least for African affairs, is the fact that the term 'post(-)colonial' locks us in the ever-present dynamics of colonization which becomes a kind of maximum security prison from which it seems impossible to escape; it appears that we are fated to be defined in terms of the pre-colonial, the colonial and the post-colonial. Clearly, these categories imply subordination, the African being irremediably labelled a 'colonized person' and thus a chronic subaltern. Therefore, these categories must be, if not transcended, at least continually subverted so that if there is to be a 'post(-)colonial' appellation, we will not allow the 'colonial' to dominate. I am

⁴ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989); *Callaloo: Post-Colonial Discourse* (Fall 1993); Biodun Jeyifo, 'The Nature of Things: Arrested Decolonization and Critical Theory', *Research in African Literatures*, 21 (1990). Ella Shohat, 'Notes on the Postcolonial' *Social Text*, 31.2 (1993), 99-113; Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997). For a good summary of the debate, see also, Ato Quayson, *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2000).

aware that the first question that will be asked of me is: 'Do you have alternative terminologies to propose?' Unfortunately the response is 'No'.

Like many other scholars, I am in a double bind, constantly battling terms like 'Francophone' and 'Postcolonial' while still using them, albeit with quotation marks of protest. This reflects the push and pull of ties and tensions that reinforce and perpetuate dominant discourses. Yet, I strongly feel that it is important to pose these questions of terminology because they help us to understand the connections between language, power and ideology.⁵ Part of the intellectual endeavour is to pose questions so as to generate thought in the hope that thinking seriously about these issues will open up possibilities for change.⁶ While I recognize the demands that trends in scholarship place on certain terms, I must say that words are not innocent, but rather, profound ideological markers, historically determined; local, limiting, and invariably inadequate. I believe that to use them indiscriminately, uncritically or without resistance is to buy into dominant power structures and to be complicit with the very structures that seek to impose on Africa a Western world-view, conceptually and intellectually. So I would argue both for the need of journals such as *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* and for the need to retain this taxonomic uneasiness — an uneasiness that should indeed be experienced as norm and constantly make us aware that certain terms ought always to be challenged, precisely because they are so important. I look forward to a long run for this new journal, in the hope that the questions posed here will be part of its field of engagement.

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⁵ See Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (1989; Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education, 2001).

⁶ Ibid.

New Approaches to Francophone Literature

To have a new journal devoted to Francophone Postcolonial Studies is a significant and very positive development; for it to emanate from the UK is a sign of the rapid expansion and progress that has taken place in the study of Francophone literature and culture in our universities over the last decade or so. ASCALF played a central role in promoting this, and its transformation into the new organisation can be seen as symptomatic of an important shift of emphasis. When ASCALF started, the study of Francophone literature was organised in terms of the geographical areas from which it came: thus the Association covered the Caribbean and Africa, but not Quebec or the Indian Ocean (with occasional exceptions, of course!). The greater generality of 'Francophone postcolonial' reflects a movement away from a regionally based discipline essentially concerned with national literatures, in which individuals specialised in either Antillean or Haitian or Maghreb or West African, etc., literature, to a view of the field as articulated along thematic or theoretical parameters. One can actually trace the beginnings of this movement through the successive ASCALF Yearbooks: the first one was divided up into sections based on Caribbean, Maghreb, and African literature (even the two articles which would not fit into this classification were each given their own regional section on the Contents page: 'African film' and 'African language'), while the second and third were devoted to a common *theme*, but still subdivided regionally. The fourth number, however, moved completely away from geographical provenance as an organising principle, subdividing its overall theme — genre — into six purely thematic sections.

But, if geography no longer provides a definition and structuring of the subject area, what, if anything, does? Is there any reason why Ousmane Sembene or Aimé Césaire should be subjected to different critical methods from metropolitan French

writers? Introducing the first number of the *ASCALF Yearbook* in 1996, Peter Hawkins stresses the importance of 'broadening and deepening our understanding of the complexities particular to the area of literary studies which we are seeking to promote and defend', and adds 'our subject-matter is different in status and in the problems it poses from the more conventional literary and scholarly studies rooted in a national heritage, such as French Studies'.¹ What are these 'particular complexities' and this 'different status'? If Francophone Studies is to retain any coherence as a distinct field of study, we must be able to identify a group of common issues characterising postcolonial cultures and distinguishing them from cultures that do not have a colonial history.

These issues, I suggest, are simply those that are direct consequences of a conflictual history with French colonial power. In the first place, a resistance to having been the stereotyped object of the colonisers' representations — as when Glissant remarks: 'Nous devons développer une poétique du "sujet", pour cela même qu'on nous a trop longtemps "objectivés" ou plutôt "objectés"' — and hence a powerful if not always very explicit sense of creating a *new* literature (and a new readership to go with it). Secondly, a different, contestatory perception of history, and also of modernity; and thirdly, an ambivalent attitude towards the French language.

These dominant emphases have tended to produce particular types of critical approach. The necessary first stage in Francophone criticism — in which ASCALF, in its early days, was very active — was a fairly straightforward matter of discovering previously little-known writers and introducing them to a wider audience. On this basis, texts were then interpreted in a very direct relationship with their historical and geographical

determinants. This was partly because the inherent violence of these latter means that they weigh more heavily on literary texts than is the case in much, although not all, European literature (hence the idea that postcolonial culture is inescapably political). It was also partly just because we were so aware of our own ignorance, as European critics; knowledge of the concrete historical and social realities of the cultures we were beginning to study was seen as offering some protection against our, entirely justified, anxiety to avoid imposing eurocentric readings on texts from the Third World. This in turn led to a premium placed on realism and authenticity which continues to be prominent in Francophone and postcolonial studies: literature seen primarily as testimony, with a strongly autobiographical element even in fiction, or as an explicitly political, militant representation of societies undergoing profound change.

Alongside this, however, Francophone literary criticism has, from the start, also been sensitive to the repercussions of the authors' complicated, sometimes fraught, relationship to the French language. This has produced a more 'textual' approach: examining how deviations from standard French work to create a new kind of literary language (in *the écrivains de la créolité*, for instance, but also in earlier writers such as Simone Schwarz-Bart or Ahmadou Kourouma), or the various ways in which traditional oral culture, or *oralité* per se, can be incorporated into literary texts. Thus the realist concern with history, political struggle, migration, the position of women and other substantive themes has been accompanied by a different kind of attention to *style* — a stylistics that is, in a different way, equally informed by the pressures of a political situation.

But if, as I have implied, the literary objects of postcolonial criticism cannot be defined solely by the ethnic and historical origins of their authors (in the simple sense in which, for instance, 'eighteenth-century French literature' is literature written in the eighteenth century by French people), but only by their thematic

¹ Peter Hawkins, 'Editorial', *ASCALF Yearbook*, 1 (1996), p.6.

² Édouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p.257.

or literary characteristics — the common issues to which I have referred — then it must follow that not *all* literature written by Algerians, Réunionnais, Guadeloupeans, etc., is necessarily 'postcolonial' in any sense relevant to postcolonial studies, at least as presently constituted. As Francophone texts are increasingly diversifying and moving away from the direct concern with political issues, including the politics of language use, that was previously dominant, this is becoming an urgent problem: we will have to encourage a greater diversity of critical models as well.

Therefore, while the bringing together of Francophone literature and postcolonial studies is a welcome development in so far as it opens up new and more theoretically ambitious approaches to non-metropolitan writing in French, we should I think be on our guard against the danger that postcolonial theory might in turn prove to be too restrictive a framework to encompass and illuminate all the Francophone texts we wish to study. Both 'Francophone' and 'postcolonial' are of course problematic terms with complicated histories. The former still has uneasily ambiguous implications either of neo-imperialist uniformity or a dubious partitioning of non-metropolitan from 'French French' literature; but it will remain a necessary concept as long as the socio-historical specificity of the literature in question continues to be relevant. Postcolonial theory has gone through a process of establishing itself as a discrete body of work with its own disciplinary identity and legitimacy; it is now beginning to relax, as it were, and accept a greater theoretical pluralism and hybridity. Building bridges between Francophone literature and Anglophone postcolonial theory can and no doubt will generate a great many good new analyses of literary texts; but it will also, hopefully, contribute to the further expansion and greater permeability of the boundaries of the theory itself.

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Challenging the monolingual, subverting the monocultural: the strategic purposes of Francophone Postcolonial Studies

The institutional and intellectual history of postcolonial theory — or of postcolonial studies more generally — is similar to that of other disciplines or fields of enquiry whose emergence has been so equally and so dramatically rapid: an initial search for respectability or orthodoxy led to a critical moment of self-absorption, and it was this moment of crisis or questioning of purpose and worth that triggered a more attenuated and historicized exploration of origins and of potential future directions. In the 1980s emergence of a critical tendency dubbed postcolonialism, the search for a key critical thinker and foundational text transformed Edward's Said's *Orientalism* (1978) from being the work of a challenging, even subversive comparatist into a seminal (i.e., over-anthologized, over-quoted and under-read) point of reference.¹ In the plethora of postcolonial anthologies, readers and critical introductions that appeared in the early 1990s, Said's work was complemented by that of Bhabha and Spivak, and the three scholars were unwittingly transformed into a Holy Trinity of postcolonial thought. As critics such as

¹ Said's uneasy (and latterly more hostile) attitude to the 'postcolonial' is explored by Patrick Williams, 'Nothing in the Post? — Said and the Problem of Post-Colonial Intellectuals', in Patrick Williams, ed., *Edward Said, 4 vols* (London: Sage, 2001), I, pp.314-34. In *Edward Said: Criticism and Society* (London: Verso, 2002), the first comprehensive intellectual biography of Said, Abdirahman A. Hussein has suggested that the privileging of *Orientalism* has led to the eclipsing of *Beginnings* (as well as of Said's political writings) and to a consequent misunderstanding of the Saidian project.

Graham Huggan and Peter Hallward have suggested,² it was in the later 1990s that postcolonialism risked backing itself into a critical *impasse*, characterized by squabbles over hyphenation, by the tendency — fuelled, in part at least, by publishers' commercial imperatives — to synthesize previous work in the field instead of seeking new lines of research, by the progressive entrenchment of postcolonialism as a monolingual enclave, which has, in Harish Trivedi's mordant terms, 'ears only for English'.³

Terry Eagleton, in his contribution to the first issue of *Interventions*, alluded to this growing uneasiness when he described 'a venerable tradition of thinkers impatiently disowning the labels that probably describe them best',⁴ as if the potential diversity of the postcolonial field were tending towards fragmentation and self-denial. However, a number of recent studies have suggested that the field is in fact continuing to develop in increasingly fertile ways. On the one hand, meticulous historical accounts, such as Robert Young's *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*,⁵ have made clear that postcolonial criticism did not, as would seem to be the case in certain accounts, appear *ex nihilo* in the late 1970s, but instead exists as a transnational phenomenon, grounded in the historical circumstances of colonialism, that has transformed anti-colonial critique (classified by Young as 'tricontinentalism') into a primarily academic discourse. Implicit in such an account is an understanding that postcolonialism is to be seen, to borrow a term

² Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic* (London: Routledge, 2001), and Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001).

³ 'The Postcolonial or the Transcolonial? Location and Language', *Interventions* 1.2 (1999), 269-72 (p.272).

⁴ 'Postcolonialism and "postcolonialism"', *Interventions*, 1.1 (1998), 24-26 (p.24).

⁵ Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

from Edward Said, as 'traveling theory', i.e., the result of the transatlantic (and, to a lesser extent, cross-Channel) displacement and implantation in the 'Anglo-Saxon' academy of a mixed body of French-language criticism, of a ragbag of anti-colonial poststructuralist thought.⁶ On the other hand, at the same time as prominent French-language contributors to postcolonial thinking (such as Glissant and Khatibi, and, with the American translation of the *Essay on Exoticism* in 2002, even Segalen) have risen to prominence, there have been an increasing number of important critical and theoretical texts on postcolonial issues, written by scholars working principally on French-language material.

This progressive recognition of the essential role of Francophone material in the emergence and consolidation of the postcolonial field is not surprising. In a recent interview with Roger Célestin, Gayatri Spivak has explored her indebtedness to French-language material;⁷ were Bhabha (two of whose principal interlocutors are Lacan and Fanon) and Said (whose *Orientalism* depends on a creative divergence from Foucault, and whose field of reference as a comparatist is resoundingly Francophone, in that term's most inclusive sense) asked similar questions, their own engagement with French-language traditions would become equally apparent. The aim of sketching out this network of what Edward Said might describe as 'affiliations' is not an ultimately

⁶ Graham Huggan has succinctly described postcolonial theory as: 'the provisional attempt to forge a working alliance between the — often Marxist-inspired — politics of anti-colonial resistance, exemplified in the liberationist tracts of Fanon, Césaire and Memmi, and the disparate, allegedly destabilising poststructuralisms of Derrida, Lacan, Althusser and Foucault' (*The Postcolonial Exotic*, p.260). On 'traveling theory', see Edward Said, 'Traveling Theory', in *The Word, the Text and the Critic* (London: Vintage, 1991 [1984]), pp.226-47, and 'Traveling theory revisited', in *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta, 2000 [1994]), pp.436-52.

⁷ Roger Célestin, 'An interview with Gayatri C. Spivak', *Sites*, 6.2 (2002), 259-66.

futile attempt to assert the predominantly Francophone pedigree of postcolonialism — as Celia Britton and Michael Syrotinski claim in the special issue of *Paragraph* devoted to 'Francophone texts and postcolonial theory': 'The point is not that we need to uncover hidden genealogies allowing us to trace the roots of both postcolonial theory and *francophonie* to shared French origins, but rather that it is important to resist assumptions about its identity, and the contexts to which it can or cannot apply';⁸ nor is the aim to engage once more in often partisan and superficial arguments that privilege reading 'the original' (whatever this might mean) over study of texts in translation. Instead, this reassertion of a Francophone dimension — or the more active claim that something called 'Francophone Postcolonial Studies' may exist — allows a two-fold, two-way process that is in part self-critical, in part reinvigorating.

Francophone Postcolonial Studies does not exist, at least not as a distinct, discrete discipline. Like the fragmented academic or critical traditions to which it is most closely cognate, from which it has clearly emerged and of which it is perhaps even a hybrid amalgam — French Studies and Postcolonial Studies — it exists between other disciplines and reveals a complex genealogy whose dominant aspects and affiliations appear to vary according to individual scholars' needs, interests and preconceptions. The persistent assertion of Francophone Postcolonial Studies as a field of enquiry in its own right reflects a constructively critical strategy emerging from dissatisfaction with both the monolingual emphases of postcolonial criticism (alluded to above) and the monocultural, essentially metropolitan biases of French Studies. In this sense, Francophone Postcolonial Studies has a corrective purpose, exploiting its ambiguous status between different fields of enquiry both to trigger dialogue and to encourage self-

⁸ Celia Britton and Michael Syrotinski, 'Introduction', *Paragraph*, 24.3 (2001), 1-11 (p.5).

reflexivity. And it is important to stress this strategic, corrective function, for otherwise the emergence of this new field will accentuate the risks of fragmentation to which French Studies in particular seems currently prone. As the first of these sources of dissatisfaction mentioned above has been central to much recent criticism of postcolonial scholarship, it is on the second that I shall concentrate in what remains of these comments.

A recognizably modern tradition of French Studies in the UK emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as local benefactors, recognizing the commercial importance of foreign language acquisition, endowed lectureships and chairs in French.⁹ The tradition was dominated for several decades by French nationals — such as Gustave Rudler in Oxford, or Charles Bonnier in Liverpool — whose exilic consciousness, manifesting itself in an undeniably nostalgic form, led to an emphasis, calqued on French philological and literary studies, on 'les beautés de la langue française'.¹⁰ This tendency was perpetuated in the field's literary and canonical focus throughout much of the twentieth century. These are emphases that clearly also characterized the field of English Literature, but whereas this area was progressively decolonized, first by the inclusion of American texts, then by an interest in 'Commonwealth' material, and finally

⁹ I am aware that this emphasis is both parochial and — in the light of examples of work in the field of Francophone Postcolonial Studies cited — potentially illogical. However, space available does not allow me to reflect on the differing priorities and contexts of the area in the UK and the US; nor does it allow me to address the important issues linked to French resistance to postcolonialism. On these subjects, see Antoine Compagnon, 'Why French has become like any other foreign language in the United States', in Ieme Van der Poel and Sophie Bertho, eds, *Traveling Theory: France and the United States* (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), pp.29-38, and David Murphy, 'De-centring French studies: towards a postcolonial theory of Francophone cultures', *French Cultural Studies*, 13.2 (2002), 165-85.

¹⁰ On this subject, see Christophe Campos, 'Le Français dans les universités britanniques', *Franco-British Studies*, 8 (1989), 69-108.

by the privileging of postcolonial literature in English, French Studies has maintained its metropolitan focus, with the epithet 'Francophone' serving as a convenient category for the inclusion of non-metropolitan texts, subjects and issues. As I have outlined in the introduction to an earlier ASCALF publication,¹¹ one of the principal challenges for contemporary French Studies is to manage the transition from Francophone to postcolonial, to move beyond the illogical yet convenient binary opposition between French and Francophone and to elaborate a more inclusive and integrative understanding of the Francophone world. For in the wake of Empire, even if official French government statistics might be artificially inflated as a result of a flexible understanding of what it means to be a 'Francophone', there are as many French speakers within France as without, with a result that to reduce 'French' to France itself is to risk a very real impoverishment of our object of study.

French Cultural Studies, a strand of scholarship that is in many ways complementary to Francophone Postcolonial Studies, in studying key texts such as François Maspero's *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express*,¹² and bringing to wider attention bodies of material that have remained largely marginalized in France itself (such as the films and novels of artists of North African immigrant origin), has underlined France's own postcolonial status and explored the implications of this status for an increasingly fragmented Republican identity. Important studies, such as Kristin Ross's *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*,¹³ have suggested that the historiography of convenience not only separating colonial history from its domestic counterpart but also presenting decolonization

¹¹ See Charles Forsdick, 'Introduction', in *Travel and Exile: Postcolonial Perspectives*, ASCALF Critical Studies in Postcolonial Literature and Culture 1 (Liverpool: ASCALF, 2001), pp.v-ix.

¹² François Maspero, *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

¹³ Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

and independence in terms of clean-break settlements is little more than fantasy. The role of Francophone Postcolonial Studies is to explore these issues of interdependency in a wider frame, both historical and geographical. Its aim is to suggest that even metropolitan French culture itself is characterized, to borrow James Clifford's terms, not by the 'roots' of Republican identity and a self-sufficient sense of *patrimoine* or *terroir*, but rather by the 'routes' implicit in any understanding of national culture that sees boundaries as porous, as a marker of the potential for contact and exchange.¹⁴ Earlier understandings of Francophone Studies risked a series of pitfalls: the exclusive and ultimately illogical application, along the lines of French usage, of the epithet 'Francophone' to imply the cultural production of all Francophone cultures except the main one, France itself, created a binary relationship that encouraged the field's marginalization; moreover, this largely untheorized application of the epithet to all French-speaking cultures outwith France led to the conflation — or at least unproblematic juxtaposition — of radically different cultural and historical situations; and the tendency, particularly in terms of Africa and the Caribbean, to focus on literatures immediately preceding and following independence, suggested that these 'Francophone' literatures emerged *ex nihilo* in the 1940s and 1950s.

The aim of Francophone Postcolonial Studies, as the work of Emily Apter, Chris Bongie, Roger Little, Christopher Miller, Panivong Norindr and others makes clear, is to offer theoretical and historical texture to these debates, to elaborate a genealogy of Francophone postcoloniality that, while insisting on rigorous contextualization, creates connections between historical and geographical situations that might previously have remained

¹⁴ See James Clifford, 'Traveling Cultures', in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp.17-46.

unrelated. Central to this task are the figures and practices of travel, an essential and privileged element of the field of Francophone Postcolonial Studies — as well as the French Studies field more generally. Travel permits illumination and attenuation of our object of study, decolonizing and prizing open understandings of 'French' that so often impoverish the terms' potential diversity by (as Thomas Spear reminds us) reducing it to an association with Paris alone;¹⁵ at the same time, however, it allows self-reflexive consideration of what it means to study French-language cultures from the outside, for, as Michael Cronin argues in reference to James Clifford's work in *Across the Lines*: 'If it is now accepted that cultures do travel, that all roots lead to routes, then the foreign language nomads may find that they have finally come home'.¹⁶ An emphasis on travel allows us to bring together material (metropolitan and non-metropolitan) contrapuntally, to read against each other journeys whose vectors are contradictory, to revisit the pessimism of Segalen's *Journal des îles* in the light of the more recent work of observers of contemporary Polynesian hybridity such as Flora Devatine, Chantal Spitz, Taaria Walker, to analyse *L'Afrique fantôme* and *Tintin au Congo* in relation to *Mirages de Paris*, to interpret the 'entropology' of *Tristes tropiques* in the light of Glissant's nascent thought in *Soleil de la conscience*, to explore a body of texts such as the 2CV travel narratives of the 1950s and 1960s through the often unwritten travel accounts of the immigrant workers whose journeys to Paris made these narratives possible, to contrast the contemporary accounts of travels through France in the work of authors associated with the *Pour une littérature voyageuse* group

¹⁵ Thomas Spear, 'Introduction: Alié-nations françaises', in *La Culture française vue d'ici et d'ailleurs* (Paris: Karthala, 2002), pp.9-37 (p.9).

¹⁶ Michael Cronin, *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000), p.127.

with those very different yet equally contemporary journeys of African exiles and immigrants.

It is from these contrasts, comparisons and contradictions that the full potential complexity of the Francophone Postcolonial field emerges. In comments on an ideal for postcolonial education in post-apartheid South Africa, Edward Said uses the traveller as a model for academic freedom and openness. His comments might equally serve as a useful guide to those of us committed to the development and exploration of Francophone Postcolonial Studies:

Travelers must suspend the claim of customary routine in order to live in new rhythms and rituals. Most of all, and most unlike the potentate who must guard only one place and defend its frontiers, the traveler *crosses over*, traverses territory, and abandons fixed positions, all the time.¹⁷

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¹⁷ Edward Said, 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom: the Potentate and the Traveler', in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp.386-404 (p.404). [First published in *Transition*, 54 (1991).]

Postcolonialism and the Object of French Studies

This essay is about the role of Francophone postcolonial studies in contemporary French studies, the latter understood as an area of research, an educational field and an object of public policy. My remarks will centre on a certain loss of confidence in literary studies, whose traditional foundations have long been crumbling under the impact of various historical and academic movements.¹ There are many good reasons for that loss of confidence, some of which have been well articulated within postcolonial studies, and I will touch on some of these here. But, if only for contextual reasons, I will be more concerned with what I see as some of the bad reasons, or possible negative consequences. Some of my observations are specific to Britain (perhaps excluding Scotland) and so may appear parochial to some readers. I hope, though, that they will have broader educational and intellectual resonances. Not least for reasons of space, parts of my argument will be made rather starkly, and I will raise more questions than I can answer.

To a significant extent, postcolonial studies emerged from university English departments, whose current circumstances are somewhat different from those of French departments. A first difference, at least in England, is that almost all French departments, unlike almost all English departments, are currently struggling to recruit students. One reason for this, I think, is the dullness of parts of the Advanced-level curriculum in schools, where literary studies have to a great extent been replaced by 'topics' whose main 'selling point' is their topicality. 'Topicality', it turns out, is no guarantee that a few weeks' exposure to French

¹ An interesting discussion of those 'traditional' foundations that now appears at once dated and remarkably prescient is George Steiner's essay 'To civilize our gentlemen', *Language and silence: Essays 1958-1966* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), pp.75-88.

pollution, France's regional press and so on will inspire, politicise or indeed significantly inform even the A-level students I meet, which is to say those who *do* want to take a degree in French.

A second, not unrelated difference between French and English departments is that when students come to university to study English, they surely do not imagine that they have come to study England (or Britain, or the United States, or the Commonwealth, or anything like that). Most, in fact, come expressly to study literature — which is what, for the most part, they do. Many of my students, however, have little or no knowledge of, or particular interest in, French literature when they begin their degree. And rather a lot of them, and other people too, believe that in studying French their main object of study, besides the French language (this language 'barrier' — another major difference from English studies — attracting some and repelling others) is France itself.

Among the historical reasons for this belief, of course, is a specific idea of 'French literature' that was built on post-Romantic foundations closely allied to those of 'English literature', its perceived didactic value entangled with nationalism. One might predict that the precariousness of any simplistic alignment of culture, language and place would be more readily apparent to those approaching 'a' literature from outside the culture whose genius it is, or was, supposed to express — a prediction that would seem to be borne out by the rise of postcolonial studies amidst not only non-English students of 'English' but also non-Spanish students of 'Spanish'. Yet in practice, at least until recently, most non-French students and teachers of 'French' appear to have taken their lead from metropolitan French culture, at least in the sense of being comparatively slow to re-examine the contours of imagined French literary-cultural identity. Geopolitical factors distinguishing Britain and Spain from France, notably in their relation to the Americas, help explain the relative resilience in this regard of a particular Parisian intellectual hegemony, whose manifestations include the peculiar, racialized

way in which 'Francophone' cultures have been grouped and categorized in relation to 'French' culture, acknowledged and marginalized in the same movement.

It is probably already apparent to anyone reading this journal that against such a backdrop, Francophone postcolonial studies may play an invigorating role, shaking up some ill-founded assumptions — including certain traditional assumptions about the literary canon — and offering a framework for reflection and critique that reaches far beyond the study of literature. Indeed, whatever its institutional origins, Francophone postcolonial studies need have nothing whatsoever to do with literature. In some of its versions, then, it may lend momentum to that shift away from the literary already well advanced in schools and many university departments, making the object of study in a French degree not France and French literature but France and its former empire.

Of course, I do not doubt the legitimacy of that object of study. 'French studies', as it exists across different institutions in non-Francophone countries, is already a hybrid, interdisciplinary 'subject'. To some degree, after all, it is through the idiosyncrasies of that same historical association between place, language and literature that universities' teaching of French as a foreign language has tended to fall to literary critics rather than, say, geographers or historians, who may need it as much, or more, in their research.² In focusing on the literary here, then, I do not want

² There are nonetheless arguments for studying language through literature, which I cannot pursue here. In any case, it is evident the French language can be used to unlock many doors — though not, it may be noted in passing, all the doors the postcolonial Francophone critic will want unlocked. As S. Shankar argues in 'The Origins and Ends of Postcolonial Studies', *Ariel: a review of international English literature* 30.4 (October 1999), 143-55, a side effect of the ascendancy of postcolonial studies over its academic forebears, including old-school 'Orientalism', may be the devaluation of competency in 'non-metropolitan languages'.

to suggest that I am opposed to studying France, its politics, its history and so on — that would be absurd — or to doing so in a French department. But I am suspicious of certain *pressures* to focus on apparently more 'topical' (which often means more contemporary, and more political) material, or to focus — as postcolonial critics arguably tend to — on literature in its topical and political aspects.

One of the problems is that as one sort of cultural breadth is achieved in a French department, another sort of historical depth almost inevitably disappears. Not least insofar as they are involved in the understanding of alterity, postcolonial critics should, I think, view this as regrettable. The alterity of the past should, I think, have claims in its own right on our interest, but it can also, of course, help us understand the present. If, for instance, one wishes to analyse the *métissage* of Francophone cultures, one sets off on the wrong footing if one assumes, ahistorically, that France ever was the unified culture 'it' has sometimes believed or wished itself to be, or that suspicion of alterity within a society is somehow inherently prompted by the (pseudo-empirical, rising) 'level' of alterity within it, or indeed that thinking about such things is anything new.

In this sense, in other words, a strong case can be made for the 'topicality' of writing that is chronologically distant from us; it too, like 'postcolonial' literature, may jolt us with the unfamiliarity, or familiarity, of its voice and its concerns. The point here is partly that the study of literature is never only the study of literature, however old that literature happens to be; it never really separates us from 'the real world' and constantly returns us to it. And as a means of gaining students' interest and arousing their curiosity, literature has the advantage of being built to be interesting, as it were, deploying a panoply of techniques through which to make readers curious enough to read on. On one level, then, I would argue both that the study of literature can 'sell' very well (as the relative buoyancy of English departments

makes clear), and that, through approaches such as postcolonial studies, it can take in and lead to pressing social, political and historical issues.

On another level, however, I am not convinced that ideas of the 'topical' or 'useful' or even 'political' provide an adequate grounding for any of the academic work carried out under the banner of postcolonial or French/Francophone studies. French departments, like others, are currently subject to some insidious ideological and socio-political pressures. Those pressures are often cloaked in the language of the 'market', may be channelled through the managerial calculation of 'value added', and may also take the guise of appeals to 'the national interest'. Intellectually, at least, postcolonial critics are well placed to question the validity and coherence of an idea such as 'the national interest', and perhaps also to query the misapplication to education of market rhetoric. Indeed, a willingness to argue on such ground is part of what may give postcolonial studies its sense of socio-political relevance. Yet this sense of engagement does not in itself guarantee postcolonial studies any particular relation to, or effectivity in, the broader socio-political realm in which it is articulated. And there is a danger, I think, of misrecognizing — and misrepresenting — the nature of its work.

The danger is not only that of simply overestimating the political impact of colonial literature (generally seen as conservative) and postcolonial literature (generally seen as subversive). Indeed, that danger is relatively well advertised within postcolonial studies, and may feed into a wider suspicion of literature and literary study. What I wish to emphasize here is a related risk, perhaps less well advertised, of overstating the subversive impact of academic criticism, and the fact — which many postcolonial critics arguably fail to recognize — that its impact is not necessarily altered significantly when that work is on

a political rather than a literary theme, or when (in either case) it frames its goals politically.³

The term 'political', as used in, and across, such contexts (the overlapping spheres of the intellectual, critical, academic, governmental, etc.) is a slippery one; and what appears, or is, positive politically in one context may have negative implications or ramifications in another. The question I have wanted to raise here, finally, is not just what we teach and write about, but how we justify that, and how we are called upon to justify it by managers and politicians. For various reasons (including, again, many good reasons) there is an impetus within postcolonial studies to 'politicise' culture and education, and to move away from seemingly — and perhaps genuinely — apolitical areas of literary work. I am not convinced, though, that the politics of this move, within and for postcolonial studies, have been thought through on every level, or are invariably progressive. The logic of accepting that the *ultimate* justification of all intellectual, cultural and educational activities must be of a determinate political order may have its radical aspect, but it may also, I think, have worrying, and conceivably damaging, resonances in relation to the broader academic and educational basis on which work in postcolonial studies, along with various other fields, is currently pursued. In the back of my mind here is Derrida's (slightly different but related) argument, made when discussing a petition he signed in support of Salman Rushdie, that the writer 'must sometimes demand a certain irresponsibility, at least as regards ideological powers, of a Zhdanovian type for example, which try to call him back to extremely determinate responsibilities before

³ See Stanley Fish's sobering remark: 'Criticism can "claim" anything it likes; it can claim to be a cure for the common cold; but making good on its claims will depend on forces it cannot muster, never mind control.' *Professional Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), pp.38-39.

socio-political or ideological bodies'. The same, I am suggesting, could be said of university teachers, and not just because they are obliged to be writers too.

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The Need for Francophone Postcolonial Studies or Why French Studies Needs Postcolonial Theory

I wish to introduce this short position paper by thanking the team around Francophone Postcolonial Studies and the Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies for inviting contributions that address a debate reflected in the title of the journal itself and in the larger research grouping around it as it is now constituted. This is by no means formulaic politeness, but I hope reflects the importance of this recognition of the commitment made by a number of colleagues over recent years to develop thinking around the legacies of French colonialism in a comparatist dimension that is proving rewarding in furthering understanding of the mechanisms of colonialism and its aftermath on a global scale.

The thoughts that follow have their origins in some recent research in the field of autobiographical discourses in North African Writing in French, and present some of the ideas that had to be dealt with in situating such research and in defining terms and methodologies. The views expressed are purely personal and, although I work within a research group, what follows is based solely on my own experience and reflection on this.

Towards the end of the 1990s, when I began to look more systematically, with a view to writing about, the forms and strategies employed by writers of North African origin writing in French (I soon came to avoid both the terms Francophone and Maghrebian, seeking some more neutral ground with the eye of the outsider) in the colonial and postcolonial situations, I found myself confronted by prevailing discourses in every field with which I needed to engage — Theories of Autobiography, French Literary and Cultural Studies and more general methods of literary analysis, Francophone Studies, Postcolonial Studies. I sought to define the terms with which I decided to work as one would for any piece of research, but I also tried to make my

position with regard to the texts under analysis clear. One of the most striking aspects of working with writers such as Albert Memmi and Assia Djebar was the way in which I felt compelled to 'disclose myself' in order to engage as unambiguously as possible with their writing.

Firstly, I chose to work with the term 'autobiographical discourses' rather than 'autobiographies'. This was partially because of the difficulties inherent within the theoretical framework around the study of autobiography, a detailed discussion of which has no place here, but also because the term 'discourses' allowed my work to function within the broad theoretical framework of Postcolonial Studies as understood generally in academic practice in the English-speaking world. I used the term 'autobiographical discourses' not only to widen the debate concerning the definition of autobiography and because of the associations of 'discourse' with critical and postcolonial theory, but also because it indicates the complexity of the texts with which I sought to work. The texts that I was working with obviously engage not only with the question of individual self-expression, but also with social, ideological and historical contexts and do so in a way that invites their contribution to the genre of autobiography to be considered in a way that breaks out of the largely Eurocentric critical framework available. I also made use of feminist criticism in its attention to experimental writing strategies as a form of personal and political (in the widest meaning of the term) resistance to dominant discourses. Indeed the attention given by feminist critics to forms of life-writing by women that had been sidelined by conventional studies of autobiography provided a direct analogy with the way in which autobiography in a colonial and postcolonial context was being addressed in the French-speaking and French Studies context. I add nothing original here by stressing the fruitfulness of recent postcolonial and more established feminist theories working together, despite the lack of attention to gender in the founding discourses of postcolonial theory (and indeed in some

subsequent theory) that has been rightly highlighted by feminist critics. Finally, I also preferred the terms 'postcolonial' (again I will not rehearse the with/without hyphen debate which is familiar to us all, but which Jean-Marc Moura has recently resumed so succinctly for his French readership¹) and 'postcolonial writer' to the term 'Francophone writer' that carries within it a political agenda linked to French colonialism and the continuing debates around 'Francophonie', again familiar to us (and again resumed coherently by a number of critics in the field²).

When I began research into these forms of North African writing in French, the emphasis in critical studies, particularly in studies by French critics, focused on certain themes. One example would be on the attention given to the 'collective voice' of such writings, the constant repetition that 'every I masks a we'. Another would be the assumption that autobiography has historically been and remains a Western preoccupation. This was not only to the detriment of the analysis of individual writing strategies in the postcolonial context, but was more generally indicative of the way in which assumptions inherent in Eurocentric thinking concerning the 'value of the individual' as Karl Weintraub termed it, were masked, either deliberately or not, in French critical discourse. Postcolonial Studies, although often working with critiques of colonialism often originating in the Francophone colonial sphere, as Robert Young has recently so clearly synthesised,³ developed outside the institutions of French critical and theoretical discourse. It is therefore in a position to throw a much needed and enabling light on such assumptions and on the ways in which Republican values and

¹ Jean-Marc Moura, *Littératures francophones et théorie postcoloniale* (Paris: PUF, 1999).

² See, for example, Alec Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds, *Post-Colonial Cultures in France* (London: Routledge, 1997).

³ Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

models (without which nothing concerning French cultural values let alone French colonialism and its consequences can be understood) impact on thinking in France and in its sphere of influence.

The study of autobiographical discourses necessitates the reader to 'disclose' him or herself in relation to the text with which they are engaging. The writing strategies of many autobiographical texts implicate the reader and force them to turn their gaze on themselves, rather than exhibiting self-obsession on the part of the writer, a charge often levelled at the autobiographer. In the work of postcolonial writers, so concerned with that now over-used word 'identity', this 'self-disclosure' is paramount. An engagement with Postcolonial Studies should also necessitate such disclosure. In the postcolonial situation as literary critics, as cultural historians, as political analysts, we need to be aware of our assumptions — cultural, political, gendered, generational, all based on our life experiences — of our limitations, perhaps, when engaging with other cultures, but also of our potential. As a European, British-educated woman with a learned experience of the French language and culture and with limited experience of North African culture, I found Postcolonial Studies to be an enabling framework to engage with North Africans writing in French. Using the term 'postcolonial' with reference to the French and Francophone cultural and political contexts can only further the study of the legacies of French colonialism by removing the term 'Francophone' from its limiting and politicised connotations. Placing French colonialism and its legacy into a comparative dimension can only enable us to discover more concerning the general mechanisms at work in colonial systems and in the post-colonial (but not post-imperialist as Robert Young defines it⁴) world. The reluctance in France to address its colonial legacy is evident not only in political and social discourse, but also in various forms of cultural production

⁴ Ibid.

and the value system in which they operate, but a non-French reader or observer has difficulty understanding why this should be the case. The specific reluctance to come to terms with the Algerian War of Independence, for example, needs, of course, to be seen against the more general problematic of France's history in the twentieth century (and, as we are seeing, in the twenty-first) as has been so powerfully analysed by Henry Rousso for the post-Second World War period.⁵ This is, of course, in no way to suggest that the English-speaking world has somehow more successfully dealt with its history, but that the differences between the 'Anglophone' and 'Francophone' situations help us to be more aware of the systems of representation operating on the postcolonial subject whether European or non-European, as they both struggle with the legacies of the colonial systems.

As I have stressed, in the case of my own work it quickly became clear that it was a necessary critical strategy to step outside the French system of representation and its intellectual framework that informs the expectations of readers and critics in French, including many schooled in the French system outside France, and to think conceptually using the terminology and reflection current in Postcolonial Studies. An act of 'motivated reading', as feminist theory terms it, is crucial with regard to texts created in colonial and postcolonial situations if the tensions between competing systems of representation are to be made clear and not allowed to work against our reading. It seems to me that Postcolonial Studies offers the possibilities of just such 'motivated' readings. The postcolonial writer contests the system of representation in which he or she has been formed and seeks to construct another system of representation in which they recognise themselves, that marks out the difference from the representation constructed for them. It is at this point of difference that 'motivated' reader and writer meet. Attention paid

⁵ Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987).

to the power of difference may help the Western critic to avoid the charge frequently directed against Postcolonial Studies, that the (former) colonies once again provide the 'raw material' for European and American critical and theoretical models and schools of thought. My attempts at reading, like those of others, are open to such a charge. I am a Western woman and any work I produce is largely destined for the institutions of the Western education system, where it will be read (if I'm lucky) nonetheless by students and colleagues from very different cultural, religious, political and social backgrounds. Why therefore should my reading not be valid as long it is held within the tension produced by the complex relationship between Western and non-Western readings? Or within the differences between readings generated by gender? Or by generation? All these readings should be held side by side so that the hierarchies that still prevail in the assessment of cultural practices (and this is still particularly true in the French and Francophone institutional contexts) begin or continue to breakdown. This, it seems to me, is the value and the potential of reading with the practices of Postcolonial Studies.

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Reading the Archipelago

When I arrived at the University of Leeds in 1996, one of my first tasks was to visit the bookshop in the University Union to buy *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* (1996), edited by Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh. I would soon be teaching an MA module in the School of English on 'Caribbean and Black British Writing', and required a good resource to recommend to my students. The *Reader* seemed ideal; just published, it featured creative and critical pieces from Caribbean writers and scholars ranging from 1900 to the 1990s, prefaced by useful introductory essays. At a hefty 540 pages it seemed a substantial publication and a wise investment.

The *Reader* subsequently proved to be a useful teaching tool, and I recommended it enthusiastically to my students. I was particularly interested, then, when I opened the *Observer* newspaper on 5 January 1997 and spied a review of the *Reader* by Caryl Phillips, one of my favourite novelists. Born in St Kitts and raised in Leeds, Phillips knows the Caribbean region and Caribbean writing intimately. His review was revealing. Although he acknowledged that 'the editors have performed a service for Caribbean literature in English' in their choice of materials, he contrasted the *Reader* with *The Archipelago: New Writing From and About the Caribbean* (1996), edited by Robert Antoni and Bradford Morrow.¹ Despite being relatively short — a modest 360 pages — this collection was to be favoured for its inclusion of French, Spanish and English Caribbean writing. It made Routledge's *Reader* look 'thin'. In Phillips's view 'the best writing in the Caribbean has not been in English [...]. As the next

¹ Caryl Phillips, 'So let's just leave out the ones everyone's heard of', *The Observer*, 5 January 1997, p.16.

century draws near, the limitations of the English Caribbean tradition are increasingly apparent.²

The following year, in May 1998, I met Caryl Phillips for the first time in Haworth, West Yorkshire, the famous home of the Brontë sisters. He was appearing at the Ilkley Literature Festival to promote the Faber Caribbean Series, of which he is General Editor, that had been launched in Trinidad and Barbados the previous month. One of the novels to feature in the series was an English translation of Maryse Condé's *Windward Heights* (1998), which transplants Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) to Cuba and Guadeloupe; hence it was apt that Condé was in Haworth to read from her work. Phillips introduced me to Condé and another of the day's readers, Antonio Benitez-Rojo, the expatriate Cuban academic and writer based in the US. His short story collection *A View From the Mangrove* (1998) had been translated for publication in the series. Together with a new edition of Wilson Harris's *Palace of the Peacock* (originally published in 1960) and a translation of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *The Fragrance of Guava* (1998), these four texts constituted the first titles in Faber's series. Only one was from the Anglophone Caribbean.

The encounter made an impression. I listened to two major Caribbean writers whom I did not know reading from their work, and I gained a very different sense both of what constituted contemporary Caribbean literature and how those in other traditions and languages conceived of the region. I was meant to have expertise in the field; I was made to examine my ignorance. Struck in particular by Condé, after the readings I considered if I tended to engage with Francophone materials as theoretical or conceptual contexts of convenience. Did I, and others in my field, really know about the diversity of the region beyond our Anglophone training and research? Sure, one had read

² Ibid.

translations of Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* (1939) and been inspired by Édouard Glissant's writings on Caribbean culture, yet one encountered these materials mostly disembodied from the Francophone conditions of their possibility. On the whole, of Caribbean writers from other languages and contexts I knew little.

Rather than critics of Caribbean literature, it has often been the job of Anglophone Caribbean writers themselves to call English-speakers' attention to the work of those from other traditions. As well as Phillips's important and determined attempt to bring to an English-speaking readership important texts which have not always registered on the anthologists' radar, one thinks of the Nobel-prizewinning poet Derek Walcott's advocacy of Patrick Chamoiseau's novel *Texaco* (1992), which won the Prix Goncourt, in his collection of essays *What the Twilight Says* (1998). It is an effort which, in a different vein, one might trace back at least as far as the 1930s to C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938). This book was of monumental importance for the development of Anglophone Caribbean letters, but took as its subject not an example of British colonialism in the Caribbean but the San Domingo revolution. Yet the transnational optics nurtured in the region by Caribbean writers have not always directed the gaze of literary critics of the field.

Is this a problem created by the institutionalisation of Caribbean literary study in Britain? Perhaps so; certainly the contrast between the contemporaneous *Routledge Reader* and *The Archipelago* is striking. The study of Caribbean literature in Britain is historically indebted to the strictly Anglophone paradigm of 'Commonwealth literature' under the rubric of which many scholars importantly brought academic attention to writing in English from the Caribbean. Patterns of migration from the Caribbean to Britain at least since the 1948 Nationality Act have also helped render visible the culture and people of the English-speaking Caribbean in the British Isles. In the US, by contrast, the

legacy of Spanish and Portuguese Empires is much more marked, not least as regards language, exposing the Caribbean's links not just to Africa and India but also Hispanic and Lusophone colonialism. One's sense of 'the Caribbean' is different in each region. And whereas transnational axes such as Britain-Jamaica or Guyana-Britain are familiar to British-based students of Caribbean literature in English, 'cubanamerican' texts are less readily available or visible. So too are English translations of Francophone texts. The cultural maps we make are different, separating out into tidy realms a much more complex set of inseparable and interrelated histories.

From my position as a teacher and researcher of postcolonial literature in a School of English, the advent of Francophone postcolonial studies is analogous with Caribbean writers' calls to attend to important materials in other language traditions. For many years, related terms like 'Caribbean literature' and 'postcolonial literature' have — in Britain at least — been tacitly understood to signify English-language texts. And on those occasions when the tag '... in English' has been added to, say, 'postcolonial literature', this has more often than not been an admirable attempt to make a distinction between writing from the colonies in English and work written in indigenous languages (Urdu, Tamil, Yoruba, etc.), but not an acknowledgement of postcolonial writing in other European-derived languages. As Phillips and Walcott have advocated, such an acknowledgement is essential to one's understanding of the Caribbean region, but it is a lesson Anglophone postcolonial scholars might take to their study of many other once-colonised locations. Those of us who work in Caribbean literature in English may need to read (and actively promote) texts in other Caribbean languages; or even learn new languages. In a similar vein, the significance and necessity of Francophone postcolonial studies importantly provincialises the imperious Anglophone homogeneity of the postcolonial by

rendering visible the presence of other colonial and postcolonial trajectories which cannot be neatly bracketed or ignored.

For many years Anglophone postcolonial scholars have been inspired by Francophone thought: the well-documented fortunes of postcolonial theory bear witness to that. But the establishment of Francophone postcolonial studies may well prove to be the biggest lesson yet from which they — me — might learn. As Caryl Phillips remarks in his review, 'it makes sense to conceive of Caribbean literature as rising above national or linguistic boundaries'.³ These boundaries endure, to be sure, in many postcolonial locations, and are not easily transcended. But as Phillips rightly suggests, it is time for English speakers not only to acknowledge them, but to look beyond them and learn.

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³ Ibid.

Gare au gauffrier!

Literature and Francophone Postcolonial Studies

Among the many reasons for the significant, rapid and gratifying expansion of Postcolonial Studies in French departments of British universities, it is only realistic to recall that this development has accompanied a huge shift in undergraduate preferences away from the traditional study of literature in general and from the earlier periods in particular. Modules on Francophone literature encourage students to perform textual analysis by providing them with an attractively modern context allied to clearly identifiable historical, political, social and psychological thematics. Those who are inspired by the undergraduate experience to pursue their Francophone literary studies further can however face difficulties if a largely 'Area Studies' degree programme has not acquainted them extensively with the metropolitan literary canon. Sharing relatively few cultural, intellectual and literary points of reference with the (post)colonial but French-educated writers or filmmakers they wish to study, they have to perform the enormous task of quickly acquiring a more thorough 'metropolitan' culture as well as developing their literary critical apparatus, and at the same time pushing forward a postcolonial research topic with all of its own complexities. It is a great credit to young researchers and their supervisors that so many — judging, for example, by ASCALF conferences and publications — achieve this so effectively. But the launch of this new journal provides an opportunity to re-emphasise the incalculable value to Francophone Postcolonial Studies of a truly rounded literary culture, especially if, as those of us committed to postcolonial perspectives no doubt hope, the latter are to have a significant impact on French Studies in general.

There should be little need to reiterate here the importance of literary study in the postcolonial context: as Robert Young argues in his introductory essay to the first issue of *Interventions*, it can be maintained that postcolonial writing has helped reverse a tendency to situate literature among 'an outdated category of elitist institutions'. As Young points out, postcolonialism has, together with 'minority' and feminist texts, 'radically changed the criteria of what makes authentic art by challenging the cultural capital from which notions of the literary were derived', such that 'Writing is now valued as much for its depiction of representative minority experience as for its aesthetic qualities'.¹ Such foregrounding of the political is entirely justified, and reminds us — if a reminder is needed — to guard against the *bellettristic* approach that lingers in a very few corners of academia and is reminiscent of that cultural universalism decried by so many postcolonial Francophone writers.

At the same time, however, the highly and evidently political nature of postcolonial writing, both creative and theoretical, can lead analysts into dangers of its own, the most frequent of which is the temptation to explore a literary work by concentrating solely on its political themes and context while practically ignoring the literary strategies that crucially inflect their representation. Such studies risk turning into self-contained tautologies which conclude, via the application of postcolonial theory to postcolonial literature, that the literature in question examines (post)colonial politics! Only rarely, of course, is this last grossly caricatural depiction actually warranted; but our discipline must distance itself from the 'cookie cutter' effect that can ensue when a forcefully postcolonialist reading is not nuanced by adequate textual analysis.

¹ Robert Young, 'Ideologies of the Postcolonial', *Interventions*, 1.1 (1998), 4-8 (p.7).

As scholars of Francophone Studies, it is our task not only to contribute to postcolonialism(s) in general as a set of intellectual, cultural and critical developments, but more specifically to advance the understanding of French and French-speaking cultures. When we quite rightly choose to do this by the analysis of literary texts, we must use the full range of appropriate critical tools. There are numerous examples of good practice available, from Patrick Corcoran's sensitive responses to West African writers to Celia Britton's readings of Édouard Glissant; equally thorough and perceptive work has emerged, increasingly from France, but more often from the United States, and frequently from the pens of French speakers such as Françoise Lionnet and Mireille Rosello. These colleagues brilliantly expose the particularities of Francophone writers, situating them in their specifically Francophone and postcolonial context and contributing to our detailed perception of Francophone cultures.

Perhaps, as Francophone Postcolonial Studies evolve as a discipline, the literary strand might grow bolder still: one might look forward, for example, to more and longer analyses of the intertextual echoes between, or shared qualities and preoccupations of 'Francophone' and 'French' writers: Gisèle Pineau and Lydie Salvayre; Linda Lê and Marie Nimier; Patrick Chamoiseau and the long list of literary mentors declared in his *Écrire en pays dominé* (1997), to mention only a few, all offer rich and entirely legitimate comparative possibilities in political, thematic and formal terms. By bringing the metropolitan and non-metropolitan into closer interplay (but without amalgamating them), and by subjecting all Francophone authors (in the widest sense) to the same rigorous literary analysis, perhaps we may draw subtler conclusions about the common and reciprocal influences shaping the French-speaking cultures we scrutinise. That requires, however, a continued, if unfashionable, insistence on broad literary competencies, and a genuine sensitivity to textual

peculiarities of all kinds, as well as a firm grasp of postcolonialist precepts.

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Sur l'étude postcoloniale des lettres francophones en France

À l'heure où paraît une revue consacrée aux études postcoloniales françaises, il n'est inopportun de décrire brièvement la situation, encore minoritaire, des études postcoloniales en France et d'envisager quelques développements qu'elles pourraient favoriser. Il est en effet possible que 'l'empire contre-attaque' avec les littératures postcoloniales, mais pour l'heure, le champ intellectuel français fait de la résistance. C'est que le postcolonialisme cumule certains éléments difficilement assimilables par les études littéraires françaises. Outre son caractère multiculturel et son ouverture à la globalisation, la critique postcoloniale se confronte à des questions parmi les plus brûlantes du monde contemporain: dialectique du droit des 'minorités' et des exigences de cohésion nationale, problèmes identitaires, relation de l'Occident aux pays pauvres, sort des 'subalternes', hommes et femmes du 'tiers monde', d'où la nécessité d'un sens politique de la recherche et d'une interdisciplinarité qui ne sont pas toujours bien accueillies. Ajoutons à cela une méfiance désormais générale vis-à-vis du monde des 'post' à présent que le postmodernisme semble s'éloigner. 'Postcolonial' serait le nouveau terme venant répondre à l'automatisme culturel contemporain de la nouveauté, or un 'post' n'est pas toujours un 'néo', comme l'a observé Henri Meschonnic,¹ l'enveloppement préfixal qui domine dans certains domaines des études littéraires étant souvent la marque d'une pure rhétorique.

Rappelons d'abord que les études francophones se trouvent à la périphérie du système d'enseignement littéraire national. Cet espace d'étude transnational de littératures très diverses s'est

¹ Henri Meschonnic, *Politique du rythme* (Paris: Verdier, 1995), p. 545.

formé de manière rapide et demeure un espace en formation dans l'espace disciplinaire plus vaste des études littéraires françaises. L'importation de la critique postcoloniale dans le domaine francophone pourrait déterminer une série d'inflexions souhaitables. La plus importante paraît la fondation d'une topique des études francophones, donc d'un type de discours et de questions dominants, mettant en avant un certain nombre d'idées caractérisant les débats du moment historique considéré, en l'occurrence la prise en compte de l'importance du fait colonial.² Parler de littératures francophones postcoloniales détermine dès lors un programme très large procédant d'une attention à la dimension pragmatique de la littérature: l'intérêt pour les données situationnelles qui composent l'univers de discours des œuvres. L'étude part en effet d'une donnée situationnelle aux conséquences innombrables, la dynamique historique coloniale dont les effets présents (des frontières des États africains jusqu'au partage actuel des richesses mondiales en passant par les éléments du prestige littéraire et l'organisation du marché de la littérature) sont loin d'être anodins. L'attention à cette situation, à la fois massive et diffuse mais qui concerne les dispositions lectoriales, les usages des codes littéraires et langagiers ainsi que les modalités de la représentation, définit tant un ordre de priorité dans les études que le mode même de celles-ci. Elle peut dans un second temps, permettre de forger d'autres outils méthodologiques, adaptés à un âge non seulement post-colonial mais global.

Cette attention à la dimension pragmatique rencontre les travaux de spécialistes français de la francophonie qui ne se réclament nullement du postcolonialisme tel Bernard Mouralis pour l'Afrique.³ L'attention à la pragmatique développe en fait un

² Sur cette importance, voir Bouda Etemad, *La Possession du monde: Poids et mesures de la colonisation* (Bruxelles: Éditions Complexe, 2000).

³ Bernard Mouralis, *Littérature et développement* (Paris: Silex/ACCT, 1984), p.55. Dans le contexte allemand, l'ensemble de ce qu'on pourrait appeler

sens politique de la pratique littéraire, un peu perdu par les études littéraires françaises. Si comme l'observait Italo Calvino, il y a des façons erronées de considérer l'utilité politique de la littérature, on peut aussi distinguer deux bonnes manières d'en user politiquement: soit elle donne une voix à qui n'en a pas, donne un nom à qui n'a pas de nom, et spécialement à ce que le langage politique cherche à exclure (on peut penser à Sembène Ousmane ou Mongo Beti); soit elle est capable d'imposer des modèles de langage, de vision, d'imagination, de travail mental, de mise en relation des données, créant 'ce type de modèles-valeurs qui sont en même temps esthétiques et éthiques, et essentiels pour tout projet d'action, spécialement politique'.⁴ (Pensons à la vision du monde colonial qu'a donnée Frantz Fanon, à l'image des indépendances africaines que propose Ahmadou Kourouma, à celle du tyran créée par Henri Lopès.)

Ce sens politique de l'étude littéraire mène à des relectures de la littérature exotique européenne. János Riesz a proposé des analyses précises de l'investissement colonialiste des lettres d'Europe et a marqué les continuités lettres coloniales-lettres post-coloniales.⁵ L'attention peut aussi se concentrer sur les jeux

'l'École de Bayreuth', sous l'égide de János Riesz, a bien étudié les conditions de création des littératures francophones africaines (voir notamment les travaux de W. Glinga, de H. J. Lüsebrink, de P. S. Diop, V. Porra).

⁴ Italo Calvino, *La Machine littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), p.82.

⁵ Sur l'investissement colonialiste de la littérature européenne voir son article 'Zehn Thesen zum Verhältnis von Kolonialismus und Literatur', in *Literatur und Kolonialismus I*, édité par W. Bader et János Riesz (Frankfurt: Bayreuther Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft, 1983), pp.9-26, et János Riesz, *Französisch in Afrika: Herrschaft durch Sprache* (Frankfurt: IKO, 1998). Sur les continuités lettres coloniales-lettres post-coloniales voir son livre *Koloniale Mythen-Afrikanische Antworten: Europäisch-afrikanische Literaturbeziehungen*, 1 (Frankfurt IKO, 1993) ainsi que son article 'Littérature coloniale et littérature africaine: hypotexte et hypertexte', in *Les Champs littéraires africains*, édité par Pierre Halen et Romuald Fonkoua (Paris: Karthala, 2000).

idéologiques européens dans l'appréhension des autres civilisations. Le tiers-mondisme a ainsi été un cadre majeur de restructuration des images des peuples non européens, pour l'intelligentsia de gauche européenne des années 1970,⁶ jusqu'à déterminer des stratégies éditoriales⁷ et la réception de tel auteur.

Le caractère transnational de la création littéraire francophone appelle divers modes d'interprétation enracinés dans les études postcoloniales:

— une reconsidération de la francophonie: dans un monde où l'anglais est *de facto* le langage global,⁸ la langue anglaise devient un complément plus qu'un concurrent pour le français. Mongo Beti le soulignait:

Pour moi, l'avenir appartient au multilinguisme; dans des villes comme Yaoundé, on voit des enfants qui sont capables de parler le beti, le français et les langues de leurs camarades de jeux. Quand l'utilisation de la langue française devient politique, je combats la francophonie, mais lorsqu'il s'agit d'un outil de communication, je la défends.⁹

— la formation d'une histoire littéraire distincte de celle qui est centrée sur le canon national, orientée vers une production littéraire internationale écrite dans une langue mais selon des modalités pluri-culturelles. La question est naturellement immense, liée à ce qu'Abiola Irele appelle l'ère 'post-nationale' de la littérature. À sa racine se trouve la tension entre l'histoire

⁶ Jean-Marc Moura, *L'Image du tiers monde dans le roman français contemporain* (Paris: PUF, 1992).

⁷ Le tiers-mondisme des Éditions du Seuil, en France, par exemple.

⁸ Voir David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁹ Mongo Beti, in Boniface Mongo-Mboussa, *Désir d'Afrique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), p.78.

littéraire, fixant cadres chronologiques et paradigmes,¹⁰ et les recherches historiographiques (posant les conditions de nouveaux modes d'élaboration et d'exposition du savoir).

Les difficultés de ces recherches sont liées à la manière de penser l'articulation histoire-littérature: histoire nationale ou comparée? Histoire de la métropole ou histoire propre (pour les Antilles, par exemple)? Refus de la théorie du reflet et donc maintien d'une autonomie littérature/histoire sociale. D'où la question de la validité des systèmes théoriques articulant littératures francophones et société. Les plus connus sont les travaux d'inspiration sociologique (champ littéraire, institution, centre/périphérie), les travaux insistant sur l'émergence, ceux qui s'intéressent aux 'minorités' et ceux enfin qui donnent une place centrale au concept de 'littérature mineure'.

La prise en compte de l'hybridité culturelle et littéraire (Homi K. Bhabha). Ce site de négociation politique, de la construction du symbolique, autorise une autre distribution du sens, une répartition différente parce qu'aucun des deux (ou plus) moments définis précédant ce site n'y est importé dans sa forme initiale. Les participants d'une interaction culturelle ne sont pas à considérer comme des blocs monolithiques. L'interaction dissémine les éléments de leur identité initiale et leur donne la possibilité d'établir un nouveau site où ils ont de fait, et dans des proportions variables, changé. L'accent est placé sur la labilité des frontières, laissant apparaître le caractère double des éléments: ici et là-bas, fixe et en mouvement. Même si on peut se demander si toute société, et pas uniquement postcoloniale, n'est pas hybride.

En deçà des déclarations théoriques générales, il faut en revenir aux textes et aux moyens de les étudier. L'un des points les plus importants est l'analyse de la situation d'énonciation présupposée par l'œuvre: l'image que l'œuvre francophone donne de sa situation d'énonciation, la *scénographie* (Daniel Maingueneau).

¹⁰ Par exemple, la division en siècles de l'histoire littéraire française.

Ce dispositif est en effet crucial pour des œuvres s'inscrivant dans une situation d'énonciation où coexistent des univers symboliques divers dont l'un a d'abord été imposé et a reçu le statut de modèle. Dans cette situation de coexistence, la construction par l'œuvre de son propre contexte énonciatif est à la fois plus complexe et plus importante que dans une situation de monolinguisme relatif (par exemple, en France).¹¹ Pour l'auteur francophone, il s'agit d'établir son texte dans un milieu instable (et d'abord au plan linguistique), où les hiérarchies sont fluctuantes et les publics hétérogènes, et souvent de le faire reconnaître sur une scène littéraire lointaine. La scénographie réagit à tant d'incertitudes. À partir de cette situation d'énonciation présupposée par l'œuvre se développent certaines options formelles. C'est la description et l'étude de celles-ci qui permet de parler de poétiques postcoloniales.¹²

Cette analyse ne peut être séparée de la prise en compte de la conscience linguistique (Harald Weinrich) ou du sentiment de la langue (Henri Meschonnic) cardinal pour un auteur qui écrit dans un contexte manifestement plurilingue. Comme le souligne Alain Ricard, cette 'conscience de la multiplicité des langues, expérience d'une manière d'éclatement du discours, marqué par la diglossie et le métissage' peut être source d'insécurité linguistique (Jean-Marie Klinkenberg).¹³ Ces littératures de l'intranquillité quant à la langue (Lise Gauvin) posent donc avec une acuité particulière le

¹¹ Comme en témoignent d'abord les fréquentes métaphores spatiales de la critique postcoloniale, insistant sur la situation du texte. Il suffit de parcourir la liste des chapitres de *The Empire Writes Back. Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, livre capital de Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1989): 'Cutting the Ground...', 'Re-placing Language', 'Re-placing the Text', 'Re-placing theory...'.
¹² Voir Jean-Marc Moura, *Littératures francophones et théorie postcoloniale* (Paris: PUF, 1999). Sur l'analyse d'un 'ethos' régional et ses difficultés, voir *Expressions maghrébines*, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur maghrébin?', 1.1 (été 2002).

¹³ Alain Ricard, *Littératures d'Afrique noire* (Paris: Karthala, 1995), p.6.

problème des tensions entre les langues et entre les univers symboliques. Elles consacrent une réalité mixte, à la fois dite et construite, dont l'attention postcoloniale à la scénographie peut rendre compte. La relation à — et la représentation de — l'environnement linguistique premier et la langue française sont déterminants pour l'écriture, comme le remarquait récemment Daniel Delas.¹⁴

Ainsi, qu'elle soit reliée au statut actuel de la francophonie, au développement d'une histoire littéraire transnationale, à l'hybridité culturelle contemporaine, au dispositif d'énonciation de l'œuvre, au rapport de celle-ci au système institutionnel francophone ou à la conscience linguistique manifestée dans l'œuvre, la critique postcoloniale devrait contribuer au renouvellement des problématiques de la recherche en France et réagir contre une hyper-spécialisation par auteurs ou par zones de la francophonie qui paraît une tendance dominante depuis une dizaine d'années. Pourra ainsi être pensée une transversalité francophone qui ne se résume plus à considérer que 'francophone' signifie 'exclu du centre littéraire français' et qui soit libérée de la mythologie universaliste issue de l'âge impérial.

Si l'on examine le statut institutionnel des études francophones en France et aux États-Unis, on constate qu'il s'agit d'une discipline dominée dans le premier cas (elle importe les méthodes des études de la littérature nationale sans se poser — ou en se posant trop brièvement — la question de la spécificité des lettres francophones et peu de chaires lui sont réservées), et d'une discipline en passe de devenir dominante dans le second (dans nombre de départements universitaires, elle remplace peu à peu les études françaises au lieu d'en être le complément.¹⁵) À l'heure où

¹⁴ Daniel Delas, 'De quelle voix parlent les littératures francophones?', in *Littératures francophones: langues et styles* (Paris: L'Harmattan/Centre d'Études Francophones de l'Université de Paris-Val-de-Marne, 2001), p.9.

¹⁵ Les études francophones se développent dans les départements de français tandis que la critique postcoloniale se développe dans ceux d'anglais et de

les études postcoloniales ont mis ces littératures au premier plan dans une grande partie du monde anglo-saxon,¹⁶ la réflexion française sur la question paraît donc en retard. Mais l'une des manières pour les universitaires français de penser l'actualité de la critique postcoloniale et de préserver une distance par rapport aux formes idéologiques dominantes et aux théories grandioses est de considérer les formes d'études textuelles qu'elle invite à pratiquer dont quelques éléments viennent d'être trop rapidement décrits.¹⁷

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littérature comparée. Voir l'introduction de Celia Britton et Michael Syrotinski à la revue *Paragraph*, 24.3 (November 2001), pp.12-29.

¹⁶ À l'heure notamment où en Grande-Bretagne, l'*Association for the Study of Caribbean and African Literature in French* (ASCALF) devient la *Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies* sous l'impulsion de son président Patrick Corcoran.

¹⁷ Je me permets de renvoyer à deux ouvrages qui paraîtront bientôt et s'intéressent à ces développements: *Les Études littéraires francophones: état des lieux*, édité par Lieven D'hulst et Jean-Marc Moura (Lille: Université de Lille 3), et Jean-Marc Moura, *Écritures du monde* (Paris: PUF 'Écriture').

Choosing a Framework: The Limits of French Studies/Francophone Studies/Postcolonial Studies

At a conference on 'Postcolonialism and the French-speaking world' in London last November, several voices (primarily Francophone, but not exclusively so) were raised in anger and incomprehension at the harnessing together in the conference title of Francophone studies — generally assumed to mean 'Francophone literature' — and the predominantly Anglophone field of Postcolonial Studies. The chief accusation appeared to be that the use of postcolonial theories to analyse Francophone texts constituted an unwanted, alien, and extremely limiting framework for the analysis of literature from the French-speaking world. Essentially, Postcolonial Studies was cast as a 'politically correct' intervention in the field of literary studies, a biased and purely socio-historical attempt to analyse literature, which was deemed to have cast aside an objective, 'scientific' and seemingly 'universal' mode of literary analysis.

In the course of this short article, I would like to assess each of these criticisms of Postcolonial Studies. However, rather than simply presenting an 'apology' for this field of research, I would like to examine very briefly the ways in which various academic fields are established, and also to explore the self-imposed limits of such categories of research. As a committee member of the academic association that organised the 'Postcolonialism and the French-speaking world' conference, it will be clear that I am interested in exploring the extent to which postcolonial theories intersect with the realities of France and its former colonies. The conference witnessed the relaunch of the organising association as the Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies (SFPS), replacing its former incarnation as the Association for the Study of Caribbean and African Literature in French (ASCALF). From

my own perspective, a shared geographical framework for the analysis of literature would thus be replaced in the new association by a shared theoretical framework, which would enable exciting new comparative research extending far beyond literature to encompass historical, political and cultural studies. I believe that SFPS can serve as a vital conduit for a genuine dialogue between (Anglophone) Postcolonial Studies and those working within what has hitherto been termed Francophone Studies. However, the evidence of the inaugural SFPS conference indicates that such a process will be difficult to achieve and that dialogue can often be replaced by parallel monologues with 'believers' and 'non-believers' in the postcolonial cause failing entirely to engage with each other. It is in the hope of helping to overcome this lack of communication that this article is written.

The shift from the linguistic and geographical framework of Francophone Studies to the socio-historical framework of Postcolonial Studies is not merely another example of academic hair-splitting over nomenclature. In fact, the current debate regarding Francophone Studies necessarily contains echoes of earlier debates within English departments over the study of 'Commonwealth literature'. This latter category encompassed all literature in English, except that written by Irish, American and white, British writers. In a well-known polemical attack on this categorisation Salman Rushdie decried the ghettoisation of non-white writing inherent in this process, declaring that 'Commonwealth literature does not exist'.¹ Equally, Francophone Studies has become a repository for all that is 'not French': rather than an inclusive incorporation of all French-speaking cultures, 'Francophone' is primarily used as shorthand for a generic, non-French 'otherness' — an otherness that often extends to French

¹ Salman Rushdie, "'Commonwealth Literature' does not exist", in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1991), pp.61-70.

nationals of non-European immigrant extraction (most notably 'Beurs'). In casting together French-speaking countries beyond France itself, this field of research seems to invite us to accept that the cultures of Switzerland, Belgium and Luxembourg are somehow 'the same as' the cultures of Senegal, Algeria and the Congo. Historical, political and racial differences are simply ignored as the shared use of French is deemed the common factor tying these disparate cultures together (this 'fact' is itself largely a fiction in many former French and Belgian colonies where often very small percentages of the population actually speak French).

This is not to say that scholars working in the field of 'Francophone Studies' choose to ignore historical, political and racial issues: in fact, the vast body of work that constitutes 'Francophone Studies' has shown itself particularly attentive to such questions. However, I would argue that Francophone Studies has found itself enclosed within a marginalised ghetto from which it is difficult to emerge. It exists in parallel to French Studies with little or no interaction between the two as though they were completely separate fields, and there is no doubting which is the minor partner in this relationship. In France, Francophone literature often finds a home in comparative literature sections; in Britain and Ireland, the subject remains marginal with an average of one specialist per department, while some French departments still have no 'Francophone specialist' at all; perhaps only in North America has Francophone Studies begun to assert itself as a key area of research that forces us to renegotiate our understanding of French Studies as a whole. However, in North America, I would argue that the term Francophone Studies has for over a decade now been used as a synonym for Postcolonial Studies (see, for example, the work of US-based critics such as Emily Apter and Françoise Lionnet²).

However, in grouping together all 'non-French' cultures, Francophone Studies defuses the most radical aspect of Postcolonial Studies, namely its capacity to shed light on the extent to which colonialism and its aftermath have shaped culture in both 'Francophone' countries and in France itself (while not forgetting Belgian colonialism). This homogenisation of the 'French-speaking world' is, to my mind, the central problem of Francophone Studies, which can seem like an extension of France's promotion of 'la Francophonie' as an egalitarian, pluralist response to the 'Anglo-Saxon' hegemony of the United States. Scholars of Francophone Studies must be careful not to be drawn into a situation where their work is automatically seen as a 'defence' of 'la Francophonie'. Collapsing the tensions, complexities and ambiguities of relations between France and its former colonies into a bland statement of linguistic-cultural unity is simply not an option.

This is why I am convinced that we must develop a coherent postcolonial field of research within French departments, and I believe that the best way of 'decolonising' the term 'Francophone' is to combine it with 'Postcolonial Studies'.³ (In the vision I am proposing, the term 'Francophone' would refer to all 'French-speaking cultures' including France and Belgium, and it would mark out this field as the counterpart to a predominantly Anglophone Postcolonial Studies.) Coupling the two terms together makes sense because in much current usage, they are used virtually as synonyms, as though Francophone Studies was the 'French version' of Postcolonial Studies: however, there is currently little interaction between the two fields. We in French must engage in an active and potentially fruitful dialogue with Anglophone postcolonial specialists. This

Françoise Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

³ For a more comprehensive overview of this process, see my article 'De-Centring French Studies: Towards a Postcolonial Theory of Francophone Cultures', *French Cultural Studies*, 13, 2 (June 2002), 165-85.

² Emily Apter, *Continental Drift: from National Characters to Virtual Subjects* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999);

does not simply entail the wholesale acceptance of all postcolonial criticism as applicable to Francophone contexts. Instead, we need to question the assumptions underlying the Anglophone focus of Postcolonial Studies. Indeed, many *within* Postcolonial Studies have already begun to question the current Anglophone bias of this field. For instance, Robert Young's monumental work, *Postcolonialism: an Historical Introduction*, somewhat provocatively positions Francophone thinking as central to the entire postcolonial project.⁴ In fact, the type of critical dialogue I am espousing has already begun: see, for instance, the recent special issue of *Paragraph*, edited by Celia Britton and Michael Syrotinski, on 'Francophone Texts and Postcolonial Theory', or the forthcoming collection of essays, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: a critical introduction*, which I have edited with Charles Forsdick.⁵ Excellent postcolonial work is already being carried out by British, Irish and US-based scholars of Francophone Studies (a non-exhaustive list includes Sam Haigh, Alec Hargreaves, Nicholas Harrison, Nicki Hitchcott, Christopher Miller, Mireille Rosello, Winifred Woodhull). After great reluctance, even French scholars are now beginning to engage in postcolonial work (I am thinking in particular of Jean-Marc Moura and Jacqueline Bardolph⁶).

This exciting new work does not involve an uncritical approach to Postcolonial Studies. Much of the work I have just cited displays a keen critical awareness of the limits of this field and acknowledges that Postcolonial Studies also runs the risk of enclosing non-French cultures in a ghetto: changing the label

does not automatically change the content. (In fact, similar arguments have been made for years now about the role of Postcolonial Studies in English Literature departments.) However, in terms of the framework it provides for the analysis of a wide and often heterogeneous field, I firmly believe that Postcolonial Studies constitutes a huge improvement on Francophone Studies in that, as well as inviting comparison of the colonial experiences of France and Belgium's former colonies, it also has the potential to question our understanding of the history and culture of the metropolitan centres themselves.

It is this use of postcolonialism to refer to such a wide range of issues that has perhaps attracted the most criticism. This critique claims that Postcolonial Studies is an attempt to draw up a 'charge sheet' of 'colonial crimes' that are located in European texts, while 'postcolonial' authors are to be studied solely for their thematic interest rather than as literary texts in their own right. I fully accept that some postcolonial criticism can be reductive; that wildly generalising claims have been made about the nature of 'the postcolonial world', claims which fail to take account of the diversity of the cultures being analysed. However, such criticisms are also regularly heard *within* the field of Postcolonial Studies, which is the site of many contesting voices rather than the monolithic discourse outlined in the vision of its critics. There is no single postcolonial theory to which all postcolonial critics adhere. Rather Postcolonial Studies draws together feminists, Marxists, poststructuralists, new historicists, amongst others, in an attempt to understand from a wide range of perspectives the connections between colonialism and culture. To my mind, this is a perfectly valid category of research. Those Francophone critics who pounce on the socio-historical framework for the category as a sign of Postcolonial Studies' intellectual weakness are, in fact, engaging in a much wider debate about the study of literature. Since the theoretical revolutions of the 1970s/80s, a split has emerged between those Francophone (in the widest sense of the term) colleagues who are

⁴ Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: an Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2001).

⁵ *Paragraph*, 24.3 (2001); Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: a Critical Introduction* (London: Arnold, 2003), forthcoming.

⁶ Jacqueline Bardolph, *Études postcoloniales et littérature* (Paris: Champion, 2001); Jean-Marc Moura, *Littératures francophones et théorie postcoloniale* (Paris: PUF, 1999).

engaged predominantly in a Genette-style school of generic textual analysis and Anglophone colleagues who have developed a whole new range of critical -isms, which explore literature from a multiplicity of angles. Equally, the desire within Postcolonial Studies to analyse history, cinema, music and other cultural forms alongside literature belongs to the wider Anglophone move towards Cultural Studies, which has met with strong resistance from certain Francophone scholars. It is in the context of this challenge not only to the reading of texts but to the primacy of literature as a subject of academic analysis that postcolonialism must be situated. This issue of the primacy of literature takes on a special significance in postcolonial contexts. As Kwame Anthony Appiah has convincingly argued, most postcolonial critics gain access to African or Asian societies through the study of literary texts written in European languages.⁷ However, European-language authors in such societies often constitute a tiny, social elite. This does not mean that their views and ideas are 'inauthentic', merely that they represent just one element of such societies. I agree entirely with Appiah that we need to look beyond literature in postcolonial societies in order to gain a more complete picture of cultural production (I will return to this need for a wider Cultural Studies approach below).

In the same essay, Appiah argues that all new fields of study involve a 'space-clearing gesture', an attempt to define what is particular to this new approach. Such space-clearing gestures can often appear to be rather sweeping in their efforts to claim subjects as their own. The primacy of colonialism as the factor that links together the otherwise disparate areas of Postcolonial Studies (an approach heavily criticised by figures such as Aijaz

Ahmad⁸) does not mean that other approaches to the cultures involved are consequently rendered redundant. All categories are to some extent strategic, bringing together 'texts' for a variety of reasons. The categories of 'twentieth-century literature', 'women's fiction', or even 'French literature' are all equally arbitrary, supposing some element of unity in their vast corpus. Postcolonial Studies does not claim an exclusivity of insight into its objects of study, nor does it preclude the use of other approaches. For instance, Rushdie's attack on Commonwealth literature, to which I referred above, was not made on behalf of Postcolonial Studies but rather in the name of a breakdown of racial hierarchies in literary criticism, which might lead to the development of the study of 'World Literature'. The development of Postcolonial Studies does not close off such an avenue, and it would be highly disingenuous to claim that it does, for the allegedly 'non-political' categories of French and Francophone Studies have certainly not fostered such an inclusive approach. Indeed, Postcolonial Studies may finally produce the 'decolonisation' of literary categories necessary for the analysis of 'World Literature in French'.

Most of the ideas proposed in this short article are predicated on dialogue and co-operation between scholars across pre-existing disciplinary boundaries. Such a process will be difficult to achieve, as accusations of dilettantism often await those who dare to venture outside their own field of expertise. However, it seems obvious to me that we need to develop a genuine, interdisciplinary approach in universities, breaking down barriers and recognising links to other subjects. There are no 'pure' academic subjects: French Studies itself is part of a network of academic disciplines involving linguistics, art history, film studies, literary theory, philosophy, history and politics. Scholars within modern languages departments thus seem ideally placed

⁷ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), chapter 7, 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern', pp.137-57.

⁸ Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Nation, Classes, Literatures* (London and New York: Verso, 1992).

to develop comparative and collaborative teaching and research, in which Postcolonial Studies could play a central part. Equally, those colleagues engaged in 'intercultural' approaches to France's 'non-colonial' relationship with Japan or China, for example, could provide another dimension to this interdisciplinary field. (Indeed, perhaps this 'intercultural' approach might become a key interdisciplinary concept with Postcolonial Studies acting as a sub-section of it?)

This does not necessarily involve the abandonment of a distinctive French Studies identity: in fact, establishing strong ties with other fields might help to situate modern languages more centrally within the university curriculum (a vital consideration in the current hostile climate for languages in British and Irish universities). For postcolonial literature specialists, much could be gained from dialogue with colleagues in history, geography, politics, philosophy, music, or even sports studies. The evolving identities of a globalised world that play such a key role in much contemporary postcolonial fiction are also central to an understanding of global tourism, the promotion of 'world music', or the movement of footballers (as well as other male and female athletes) from Africa to Europe. This is not a prescriptive task to be set for all postcolonial scholars: there is still a need for work that concentrates solely on literature. However, there must also be space for postcolonial work that looks at other areas of cultural production, as well as historical and political questions, work that attempts to develop a broader overview of postcolonial societies. Essentially, I am arguing for a process that involves scholars engaging with each other across a series of often artificial, academic boundaries. I sincerely hope that the emergence of Francophone Postcolonial Studies will facilitate this process.

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Les littératures africaines en langue française en Allemagne et en Autriche (1950–2000): un tour d'horizon*

Vu l'état actuel des études africaines en Allemagne et en Autriche, on a de la peine à croire que la constitution de la littérature africaine de langue française comme objet scientifique dans les universités allemandes fut difficile. Elle s'est installée plus précisément dans la discipline académique de la *Romanistik* ('langues et littératures romanes'), discipline traditionnellement vouée aux canons classiques des littératures romanes. De l'émergence des premières études sur cette nouvelle littérature (dont certains, au départ, mettaient en doute si elle en était une) jusqu'à l'instauration d'une *Afro-Romanistik* universitaire, la route était tortueuse et parsemée d'embûches.¹

Dans la rétrospective qui suit, nous cherchons à retracer les voies qu'ont prises le criticisme et la recherche universitaire en Allemagne et en Autriche en matière de littérature africaine de

* A longer version of this article with detailed biographical information appears in Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Katharina Städtler, eds, *Les Littératures africaines de langue française à l'époque de la postmodernité* (Oberhausen: Athena, 2003).

¹ En 1979 encore, la nouvelle branche cherchait son nom. L'aveu du professeur Riesz est symptomatique à cet égard: 'La chaire que [je tiens à l'Université de Bayreuth] a été la première à avoir comme orientation explicite la "Afro-Romanistik", terme que j'ai d'ailleurs refusé en le remplaçant par "Romanische und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft" [littératures romanes et littérature comparée], ce qui m'a paru plus conforme aux usages internationaux.' János Riesz, 'Les études de francophonie dans les universités de langue allemande: Esquisse d'une problématique et bilan provisoire', *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*, 51 (1999), 56.

langue française avant d'arriver à l'ère du postcolonialisme.

Le père fondateur: Janheinz Jahn

D'entrée de jeu, il faut préciser qu'en Allemagne la réception et la critique de la littérature africaine en langues européennes furent d'abord l'affaire d'un milieu intellectuel situé en dehors des universités, à commencer par le 'père fondateur' de la branche, le journaliste Janheinz Jahn. De 1951 jusqu'à sa mort en 1973, il s'est consacré entièrement à la collection, traduction et distribution de la littérature de l'Afrique noire et de la diaspora africaine, littératures qu'il désigna par le néologisme 'néo-africaine'. Son œuvre est caractérisée par un flot de traductions, mais aussi par la création des premiers répertoires et bibliographies à caractère scientifique qui gardent leur valeur jusqu'à ce jour.

En 1963, Jahn publia une première traduction des poèmes de Léopold Sédar Senghor, contribuant de cette manière à rendre célèbre le poète sénégalais en Allemagne. Les indépendances africaines de 1960 aidant, Senghor fut couronné lauréat du très prestigieux *Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels* (Prix pour la Paix des libraires allemands) en 1968; deux ans plus tard, son traducteur Jahn reçut le Prix de la Traduction conféré par l'Académie allemande pour la langue et la littérature (*Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung*) pour la qualité de ses traductions de la littérature 'néo-africaine' à l'allemand.

En 1961, on publia pour la première fois un roman africain traduit en entier (Ake Loba, *Kocoumbo, Ein schwarzer Student in Paris*). Il correspondait sans doute parfaitement à l'attente des lecteurs allemands pour qui le protagoniste, un étudiant africain dépaycé et dérouté par son séjour en France, symbolisait l'étranger

pour lequel on éprouvait de la pitié et qui ne pouvait se sentir heureux que chez lui.

Le tiers-mondisme religieux et politique

Un autre versant de la divulgation non-académique de la littérature africaine en Allemagne était constitué par les nombreux ateliers, festivals et foires de livres organisés par les organismes culturels les plus divers: les Églises protestante et catholique, la Foire du livre de Francfort (consacrée à l'Afrique en 1980) en passant par les foires culturelles d'inspiration tiers-mondiste (Festival *Horizonte*, Berlin 1979) qui pourraient passer comme des cas typiques de coopération postmoderne puisque s'y entremêlaient les tendances et les discours politiques les plus hétérogènes. L'importance de ces événements ne saurait être surestimée, puisqu'à travers eux la littérature africaine pouvait enfin atteindre le grand public. C'est dans ce milieu semi-politique, semi-charitable que sont enracinées quelques-unes des maisons d'édition de la littérature africaine: Horst Erdmann à Tübingen, Peter Hammer à Wuppertal, Lamuv à Göttingen, Otto Lembeck à Francfort et celle qui publia Ake Loba, Union à Zurich.

L'engagement des Églises pour la promotion de la civilisation africaine était en quelque sorte un prolongement de certaines de leurs activités en Afrique. Sensibles aux concepts de 'l'âme noire' et de la 'philosophie bantou' lancés dès 1948, elles cherchaient dans la littérature africaine des informations soit sur l'attitude des Africains face à la religion chrétienne soit sur le caractère prétendu spécifique de 'l'âme noire'. Le premier courant de critique littéraire ainsi constitué était d'inspiration politico-religieuse et avait pour but de prévoir l'évolution des pays africains après leur indépendance et le sort qui y serait réservé aux Églises. La plupart de ces analyses, ainsi que d'autres de tendance

plus séculaire, étaient axées sur les philosophies' de la négritude de Léopold Sédar Senghor et de l'existentialisme de Jean-Paul Sartre.

Vers 1980, les foires littéraires et culturelles ont lancé la littérature africaine sur le marché (ouest-)allemand. Dans la volée, la critique littéraire et académique commençait à se professionnaliser. En 1979, parallèlement au festival de culture africaine *Horizonte*, parut la première anthologie de critique littéraire, à cheval entre le reportage journalistique et la recherche universitaire. Une année plus tard, la Foire du Livre de 1980 donna lieu à des entretiens avec des écrivains africains, dont certains furent publiés par deux professeurs de l'université de Francfort. D'autres foires et expositions suivaient, produisant chacune son catalogue qui constituait alors un répertoire bibliographique précieux (par exemple, Francfort 1984, Hambourg 1984, Hambourg 1988). L'action concertée des éditeurs et des journalistes aboutit, finalement, au projet littéraire de *Afrikanissimo* qui engendra des expositions temporaires, des conférences et une anthologie.

La recherche universitaire

Les années 1970-85 voyaient se déployer les premières analyses et essais d'histoire littéraire africaine, souvent des thèses de doctorat à l'allure anti-colonialiste. Mais l'évènement le plus important de cette époque innovatrice fut sans aucun doute, en 1979, la création de la première chaire de littérature francophone d'Afrique à l'université de Bayreuth, occupée depuis le début par János Riesz (voir note 1), ainsi que, trois ans plus tard, l'instauration d'un réseau interdisciplinaire de recherches sur l'Afrique (SFB) dans la même université, cette structure permettant de mener des recherches à grande échelle. Désormais, la littérature africaine de

langue française n'était plus le violon d'Ingres de quelques afrophiles, mais un objet de l'enseignement supérieur régulier et de la recherche scientifique qui avait le droit de cité même dans les livres d'histoire littéraire académiques.

En jettant un regard sur leurs activités, on peut prétendre avec quelque raison qu'en Allemagne, la recherche universitaire sur la littérature africaine sub-saharienne fut développée avant tout par les équipes romanistes de Bayreuth. Pendant une bonne vingtaine d'années, ce groupe de chercheurs, Allemands et Africains confondus, a produit des thèses de doctorat et de doctorat d'État et une liste impressionnante de publications; la plupart de ses anciens membres sont devenus professeurs de littérature francophone d'Afrique en Allemagne (Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, Manfred Prinz, Véronique Porra, Susanne Gehrmann), en France (Papa Samba Diop, Pierre Halen), aux États-Unis (Koffi Anyinefa, Karim Traoré) et au Canada (Justin K. Bisanswa, Isaac Bazié).

Suivant le programme de recherche, le centre d'intérêt s'est déplacé au fur et à mesure de l'Afrique de l'Ouest vers l'Afrique Centrale, avec des accents sur la littérature du Sénégal, de l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Congo-Zaïre. Les approches varient suivant les sujets: histoire littéraire et sociale, typologie des genres, analyse d'images et de types, questionnements anthropologiques, sociologiques et politiques sur les phénomènes littéraires postcoloniaux, par exemple l'intertextualité produite par l'interférence des traditions orales et des écritures postmodernes dans les littératures africaines. Une autre partie des recherches menées à l'université de Bayreuth, notamment celles du professeur Riesz, concernent les rapports entre littératures africaines et européennes, la réception des cultures et littératures africaines en Europe, et leur exégèse comme enjeu identitaire européen.

Évidemment, d'autres universitaires de langue allemande ont également contribué à l'essor des études afro-francophones. Les

universités de Berlin (Humboldt-Universität), de Brème, de Cologne, de Hambourg, de Hannover, de Heidelberg, de Innsbruck et celle de la Sarre sont de plus en plus actives dans ce domaine et apportent souvent une perspective comparatiste ou interculturelle.

Collections et séries

Certaines des thèses mentionnées plus haut ont paru dans des collections et séries créées au fil des années par différents départements ou professeurs d'université. Un grand nombre des travaux mentionnés portant sur la littérature de l'Afrique noire furent publiés par la maison d'édition IKO de Francfort dans la collection démarrée en 1993 *Studien zu den frankophonen Literaturen außerhalb Europas* ['Études sur les littératures francophones hors d'Europe'], collection co-éditée par les professeurs Karsten Garscha, Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink et János Riesz. Ce dernier peut inscrire à son compte la création et la gestion de deux autres séries de cahiers, à savoir *Komparatistische Hefte* (1980-87), qui ont publié deux numéros sur la littérature africaine, et *Bayreuther Francophonie Studien/Études Francophones de Bayreuth* [BFS], éditées en collaboration avec Véronique Porra depuis 1997. Les BFS se sont dotés d'une série de cahiers monographiques (*Beihefte/Série monographies*) dont certains concernent également la littérature africaine de langue française.

Une autre série paraissant à Bayreuth sont les *Bayreuth African Studies* [BASS] éditées par Eckhard Breiting, série qui vise surtout les nouvelles littératures anglophones et les arts africains. Elle est arrivée à près de 70 numéros en 2002, et elle compte huit volumes sur la littérature afro-francophone. Également une entreprise de longue haleine est *Matatu* qui paraît depuis 1987.

Cette ancienne revue s'est mutée en une série de volumes paraissant régulièrement chez Rodopi à Amsterdam. Elle vise surtout les littératures anglophones d'Afrique, mais on y trouve aussi quelques contributions concernant l'Afrique francophone.

Pour terminer la revue des séries, signalons deux créations récentes à Brème. Premièrement, plusieurs universitaires y ont créé la série *Bremer Beiträge zur Afro-Romania* [BBAR] qui compte déjà quatre numéros dont trois sur des pays africains francophones. Deuxièmement, Sélom Komlan Gbanou, journaliste togolais docteur ès lettres de l'université de Brème, y a fondé sa propre maison d'édition qui porte le même nom que la revue qu'elle édite depuis 1996, *Palabres*. Cette 'revue d'études africaines' paraît sous forme de cahiers bi-annuels depuis 1996 et est consacrée aux thèmes les plus divers liés aux littératures africaines, de préférence francophones.

Ouvrages collectifs

Au niveau des ouvrages collectifs, on trouve trois types de publications: d'abord de nombreuses contributions aux répertoires et dictionnaires littéraires, ensuite les volumes d'hommages, et finalement les recueils d'articles faisant suite à des colloques et à des congrès divers. Les articles dans les répertoires sont malheureusement peu connus, mais ils peuvent contribuer à informer rapidement les lecteurs curieux de se familiariser avec les caractéristiques et les grands auteurs de la littérature africaine en langue française.

Quelques volumes d'hommages (en allemand *Festschrift*) contiennent également des articles sur la littérature africaine francophone ou lui sont entièrement consacrés. Les *Mélanges Gérard* et les *Mélanges Riesz* rassemblent à eux seuls la plupart

des personnes travaillant sur les littératures africaines et constituent donc des inventaires de la recherche afro-francophone en Europe quasi complets.

Cependant, les actes du tout premier congrès en Allemagne sur la littérature afro-francophone (Bayreuth, novembre 1984) furent publiés par la revue de l'association des professeurs de français de l'enseignement secondaire.

Revue

En effet, la revue *Französisch heute*, fondée en 1969, joue un rôle très important dans la diffusion du savoir sur la littérature africaine de langue française. Depuis le début des années 1980, elle ne cesse de publier des dossiers et des articles sur le monde francophone. En plus des numéros spéciaux cités, on trouve des articles sur la littérature maghrébine et sub-saharienne dans plusieurs cahiers. L'intérêt que l'association des professeurs de français porte aux nouvelles littératures africaines a engendré très tôt le premier matériel didactique à l'usage des lycéens ainsi que la réflexion sur l'enseignement de ces littératures.

D'autres revues romanistes allemandes publient également de temps à autre des numéros à thème unique ou des articles sur la littérature francophone d'Afrique, mais tout compte fait, ceux-ci restent un phénomène marginal. La seule exception à la règle est constituée par la revue annuelle *Neue Romania*, éditée par l'Université libre de Berlin. Non seulement elle consacre bon nombre de ses cahiers à la francophonie, mais encore elle a publié dernièrement un numéro d'études sur toutes les littératures «de langue romane» en Afrique.

Contrairement à l'Allemagne, l'Autriche a déjà créé sa revue d'études francophones, *Cahiers francophones d'Europe Centre-*

Orientale (abrégé *Cahiers de l'AEFECO*), éditée par les départements de français des universités de Vienne (Autriche) et de Pécs (Hongrie). Certaines contributions dans ces cahiers annuels thématiques étudient la littérature afro-francophone et/ou son enseignement.

Internet

Une autre preuve de ce que la littérature africaine de langue française cesse peu à peu d'être un sujet marginalisé, c'est qu'elle est très présente dans la toile mondiale. Le professeur Klaus Schüle de l'université de Brême a même créé la première revue électronique francophone d'Allemagne, *France-Mail-Forum* (www.france-mail-forum.de), qui a mis en ligne un Dossier *Contes et légendes africains* avec des traductions et une bibliographie. D'autres textes sur l'Afrique, d'auteurs allemands ou travaillant en Allemagne, sont également disponibles sur internet.

Conclusion

Nous ne venons pas d'établir un bilan complet de la recherche en Allemagne et en Autriche, loin s'en faut. Dressons tout de même un bilan provisoire. La littérature africaine de langue française a commencé à prendre son essor en Allemagne autour de 1979-80. De nombreuses traductions avaient paru auparavant, mais elles n'avaient rencontré ni l'intérêt du grand public ni celui des universitaires. Depuis les années 1980, avec l'université de Bayreuth comme institution motrice, la recherche académique s'est développée autour de trois centres d'intérêt:

1) elle interprète la forme et le sens des littératures africaines en adaptant les modèles courants de l'analyse de textes européens (sémiotique, para-/hypo-/hypertexte, narratologie, etc.);

2) elle essaie d'écrire l'histoire de cette littérature, se limitant la plupart des fois à une littérature nationale;

3) elle cherche à déterminer les rapports et les influences qui déterminent une littérature africaine en général, par exemple, son rapport à une tradition orale spécifique ou au champ littéraire français.

Par contre, rares sont encore les analyses de l'institution littéraire en Afrique, des conditions de la production et de la réception, des associations d'écrivain(e)s et des maisons d'édition africaines, du champ littéraire et intellectuel, du champ littéraire exilé, de l'impact de la mondialisation. Serait-ce là une séquelle de la prédominance des théories sémiotique et déconstructiviste dans les universités? D'autre part, même si l'influence de la tradition orale sur la littérature écrite est incontestable dans certains cas, il s'avère difficile de réaliser des coopérations entre les spécialistes des langues africaines et les romanistes pour concrétiser cette interdépendance. À la rigueur, les médiévistes, habitués à travailler sur des textes d'origine orale dont la forme et le contenu étaient soumis à une grande variabilité, seraient les mieux placés pour collaborer avec les africanistes en ce qui concerne le passage de l'oral à l'écrit. Un rapprochement entre les épopées médiévales européennes et les épopées maliennes fut entrepris par Ousmane Bâ (Bamako), et on attend avec impatience les résultats de cette comparaison. Un autre dialogue peu analysé est celui entre littératures africaines francophones et littératures africaines anglophones ou lusophones, et il en est de même pour l'intertextualité entre littératures africaines et littératures postcoloniales non-africaines (latino-américaines, hindou, etc.). Enfin, à quelques rarissimes exceptions près, les chercheurs germanophones ne se sont pas encore assez intéressés à la

nouvelle littérature africaine produite dans les pays, francophones ou non, où ses auteur(e)s se sont exilé(e)s, ni à celle des femmes africaines d'hier et d'aujourd'hui.

Sur le plan institutionnel, on peut plaindre l'absence d'une association scientifique regroupant les chercheurs en littératures africaines ou francophones d'Afrique comme il en existe aux Etats-Unis, en France et en Grande-Bretagne. En Allemagne, il n'y a même pas de revue spécialisée dans ce domaine. Vue les conditions économiques prévalant au début du 21^e siècle, il ne faut sans doute pas rêver de la création d'une nouvelle revue quand d'autres organes réputés cessent de paraître par manque de soutien financier. Il serait tout aussi utile d'avoir une liste de messages électroniques ('mailing list') à laquelle on pourrait s'inscrire gratuitement et qui rendrait compte des nouveautés dans le domaine de la littérature francophone d'Afrique. Nous n'aurions alors plus à attendre pendant un an que paraisse le prochain volume du *Klapp*² et à errer entre les rubriques 'La littérature aujourd'hui/Auteurs' (pour les publications concernant les auteurs francophones) et 'La littérature hors de France' (pour les publications concernant les généralités et les textes francophones) et la recherche allemande et autrichienne sur la littérature africaine en langue française pourrait se faire connaître plus facilement dans les pays francophones.

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² Le *Klapp* est une bibliographie annuelle; voir, par exemple, Astrid Klapp-Lehrmann, éd., *Bibliographie der französischen Literaturwissenschaft: Bibliographie d'histoire littéraire française* (Francfort: Klostermann, 2002).

Francophone Studies in Global Contexts

Whether or not one has adopted the label 'Francophone Studies' in order to designate those literatures and cultures outside of France or within France's postcolonial communities that intersect around French-language usage, the fact nevertheless remains that this term has been practical in rethinking French Studies and fostering interdisciplinarity. The adversarial component of the term concerns the role of France itself in this category, since many have argued that *Francophonie* itself, as a governmental and institutional phenomenon, effectively transfers and relocates France's colonial centrality in the era of decolonization and postcoloniality. Acknowledging the polemics of this debate and in turn expressing my own positionality alongside those who have questioned *Francophonie*'s hegemonic potential, I want to take the opportunity in this short essay to explore French anthropologist Jean-Loup Amselle's recent emphasis on the synonymous links he identifies between the 'global' and the 'universal', in constructing globalisation as another universalism.¹ In turn, this will enable me to establish parallels between colonial discourse on Africa and the manner in which these projections and constructs have been recuperated in contemporary discourse on Africa, thereby signalling important theoretical issues as they pertain to Francophone studies in global contexts.

One of the principle areas of inquiry, in which such an approach seems particularly pertinent, concerns Francophone African writings that have adopted diasporic and transnational frameworks in order to address questions relating to African women. To this end, Roland Robertson's term 'glocalization', used to better designate the interaction and *interpenetration* of the

local and the global, becomes useful in recontextualizing the relationship between Africa and the diasporic communities residing in the hexagon.² This interconnection of populations is also central to Amselle's notion of 'branchements' given his insistence on the transhistorical manner in which all populations are necessarily imbricated. Both transnational and transcolonial approaches, but also multi-sited ethnographies, have much to offer us in this process. If the imperative is to 'déterritorialis[er]'³ Africa, then perhaps the circumstances of African women could serve as the paradigmatic deterritorialized signifier, containing simultaneously the opportunity to contextualize and recontextualize a multitude of identities around a common, global defining characteristic.

A number of recent texts by African writers have reflected a disturbing pattern, effectively displacing and shifting the responsibility for the plight of African women in the diaspora away from the West in order to *re-attribute* it to Africa, highlighting some of the more problematic dimensions of discourse on human rights, universalism, and hegemony. In this case, African women are consistently represented as the victims of a system of African values and customs from which salvation and emancipation is to be obtained in one's proximity to Western 'universalist' principles. Protagonists therefore travel to France in order to gain cognizance of their status as alienated, disenfranchised, and oppressed subjects, realizations attributed to ignorance of notions of individual rights. These are apparently absent in the African context, yet symbiotically intrinsic to the foundational tenets of the French model of universality and

² Roland Robertson, 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity', in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson, eds, *Global Modernities* (London: Sage, 1995). On the notion of 'interpenetration,' see Bill Ashcroft, *Postcolonial Transformations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p.214.

³ Amselle, p.15.

¹ Jean-Loup Amselle, *Branchements: Anthropologie de l'universalité des cultures* (Paris: Flammarion, 2001), p.47.

ventriloquized in the assumed adherence to the 'Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme'. But the implications are also far greater than this simple tautology, since the construction of Africa as a site characterized by some kind of originary lack reproduces the type of colonial discourse that justified imperial expansionism.

While not negating or denying the relevance and potential importance of works that deal with women in France's postcolonial communities, I insist on underscoring how certain approaches run the risk of effectively undermining the positive dimension by recuperating stereotypes that contribute to the marginalization of women. The 1998 novel, *Rebelle*, by the writer Fatou Keïta from Côte d'Ivoire, is an example of such a text.⁴ The novel explores the particular socio-cultural circumstances of African women in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa and in the Francophone African diaspora. While examining questions pertaining to women's rights, Keïta's text fails to provide a specifically radicalized framework for African feminism or to herald the emergence of a model of feminist contestation and oppositionality.

Keïta's text focuses on a young woman named Malimouna who escapes her rural village when, after an arranged marriage, her new husband discovers that she has not been excised. Homeless, on the run, she finds a position as a nanny in the urban capital and ends up moving with a French family to the hexagon, thus shifting the topography away from Africa to France, and into the Black diasporic community. Prompted by her own experiences in France, and the observations she has registered concerning the treatment of African women in the diasporic context, she decides to help other immigrant women. Malimouna's interventions provide the novel with the occasion to address issues that generated intense debate in France during the 1980s and 1990s.

One such narrative concerns a young woman from Mali, named Fanta, who has been sent by her family to France to assume residence with the husband they chose for her. Malimouna and Fanta immediately develop a friendship. However, while Fanta may feel confused by her new environment when she first arrives in France, she does not question the socio-cultural codes her husband embraces and which she shares — the 'local' value system is thereby reproduced in the diasporic context. The distance between the private values of the diasporic home and the standards of the public space soon become evident.

Increasingly, Keïta's argument feels less inclusive and willing to incorporate the rationale for African customs and traditions. The rift between Malimouna and Fanta grows wider when Fanta comes to her in order to solicit assistance with a growing domestic problem, namely her daughter's refusal to undergo her own scheduled excision. The visit provides Malimouna with the opportunity to reflect on the situation, to question the logic that informs the practice, and to confront a complex ideological challenge. Her attempts at dissuading Fanta prove futile, since she has been conditioned to embrace and perpetuate cultural codes whose validity are not diminished in the immigrant context. Nevertheless, while Malimouna is opposed to the practice of excision, she also has difficulty accepting the French legal characterization of the practice as a 'barbarous mutilation'. She is confused by her attempts at expressing her opposition to the practice without simultaneously adopting a relativistic model. Yet, she repeatedly emphasizes that outsiders cannot fully understand and access the specificity of the African context. But her text actually contains contradictions. For Malimouna, it would seem, it might be impossible to reconcile the two positions. The work of Calixthe Beyala provides a useful contrast to Keïta's novel, offering examples of how complex socio-cultural issues can be addressed in a more productive manner.

⁴ Fatou Keïta, *Rebelle* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1998).

In two works of non-fiction, *Lettre d'une Africaine à ses sœurs occidentales* (1995) and *Lettre d'une Afro-française à ses compatriotes* (2000), Beyala adopts a global framework with which to address the circumstances of women.⁵ The titles of these texts deserve additional commentary. In the case of the former, Beyala situates herself as an African women, and it is from that perspective that she establishes a connection and solidarity with her Western sisters. However, in the latter case, her positionality has shifted to that of an 'Afro-française' and her audience — her compatriots — are rendered as ambiguous as the hyphenated identity marker from which she speaks. The compatriots she has in mind are specifically the French women she is surrounded by in the territory she has adopted and in which she attempts to integrate. Yet, an alternative reading would allow us to suggest that she simultaneously engages both the African diasporic populations living in the hexagon and her Cameroonian compatriots who might benefit from the text's forthright assessment of race relations in France. In the *Lettre d'une Africaine à ses sœurs occidentales*, Beyala deals with gender questions (excision, polygamy, patriarchy, etc.) in the African context, while in the *Lettre d'une Afro-française à ses compatriotes*, the emphasis has shifted to the subject of racism, xenophobia, and minority populations in the hexagon itself. Nevertheless, situating these texts in dialogue with one another enables us to highlight multiple sites of oppression, and thereby potentially circumvent the reductive implications of a universalist agenda.

Beyala acknowledges in her *Lettre d'une Africaine à ses sœurs occidentales* her own indebtedness to, and the importance for African women of Western feminist models elaborated from the

1950s onwards (p.10). In fact, she extends this significant gesture in calling for the support of Western women in scrutinizing African cultural, political, and social practices (p.12). However, a significant point of departure from this discourse emerges when she establishes a comparison between the common silence of victims of domestic violence or rape in the West and excised women in Africa (p.92). Beyala simultaneously underscores the mutually constitutive component of this 'sisterhood' signalling through a globalizing transcolonial and transnational framework what women have to learn from each other's struggles (p.103). In this context, Western feminism does not stand alone. This allows Beyala to effectively dismiss the potentially unilateral nature of Western feminist discourse, substituting in its place an approach that replicates her personal and intellectual trajectories. Beyala's own in-betweenness affords her a privileged perspective from which to comment on these questions. Rejecting the marginalizing impact of the hyphenated identitarian status that is implied by the 'Franco' component utilized in France to describe minority populations (franco-Algérien, franco-Africain, etc.), 'toujours ce Franco et quelque chose, qui situe l'autre dans des sphères de différences, l'éloigne de la communauté nationale et crée en son sein des sous-communautés nationales',⁶ Beyala replaces the negative quality of this label and reinvests it instead with the affirmative qualities of a multicultural, multiethnic, and multinational signifier.

Invariably, one's position with regard to the practice of excision is secondary to the broader implications of this discourse. In fact, few would argue that the origins of the practice are not located outside of an explicitly oppressive interpretation of female sexuality. Rather, what is at stake are the implications both for the African and the diasporic immigrant context, in determining whether the motivating impulse behind feminist engagement is

⁵ 'Calixthe Beyala, *Lettre d'une Africaine à ses sœurs occidentales* (Paris: Spengler, 1995); and *Lettre d'une Afro-française à ses compatriotes* (Paris: Éditions Mango, 2000).

⁶ Beyala, *Lettre d'une Afro-française*, p.40.

merely designed to maintain French assimilationist and recuperative hegemony through the dissemination of negative discourses pertaining to African socio-cultural practices. Indeed, this is what Beyala has argued.⁷ If that is indeed the case, then such discourse will continue to impede and limit the dynamism associated with the heterogeneous nature of transformations in the immigrant context. However, questioning and challenging this mechanism provides the opportunity to displace the responsibility for African women and allow them to become the agents of change. While this is an important step towards the type of argument advocated by Lionnet, whereby 'this form of universalism does not objectify the other and assume her into my own world view; what it does is create a relational space where intersubjectivity and reciprocity become possible'.⁸ In turn this makes it 'pointless to claim that the issue opposes communitarian values to universal ones; the actual conflict hinges on the opposing claims of two different communities, one of which would like to believe that its culture is a "universal" one'.⁹ For Beyala, the question of validating cultural difference contains its own boundaries: 'Mais ne confondons pas les choses: respecter les différences culturelles ne signifie pas accepter n'importe quelles insanités, n'importe quelles barbaries dont certaines sociétés — notamment la société africaine — nous abreuvent.'¹⁰

Beyond any kind of relativistic discourse, the fact remains that this is a debate that needs to take place in Africa and beyond the continent by infusing the debate with a 'deterritorialized' notion of Africa that would allow for dialogue with African diasporas in global contexts that do not automatically have to be associated

⁷ Ibid., pp.24-37.

⁸ Françoise Lionnet, 'The Limits of Universalism: Identity, Sexuality, and Criminality', *Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.153.

⁹ Ibid., p.166.

¹⁰ Beyala, *Lettre d'une Africaine*, p.99.

with an ethnocentric context. When this is evidenced or achieved, then it becomes possible for us to migrate away from a purely national notion of identity towards to what Bill Ashcroft has characterized as the 'interpenetrative' dimension of globalization.¹¹ This eliminates the pitfalls of universalism and the accompanying reductive categories, offering instead an incorporative paradigm of ethical conduct that is not constructed merely according to the principles and coordinates of Western codes and standards. While Keïta's text provides an example of how a more popular usage of literature can be employed or deployed in addressing important sociocultural issues for African women, it does not develop a specifically African notion of feminism, or for that matter advocate any kind of alternative feminist or womanist agenda. However, it contains a paradoxical dimension given that the advocacy and appeal for individual rights takes place initially in France, where such notions have themselves been rejected by the universalizing exigencies of Frenchness in addressing the potentialities of a multicultural society. As Beyala forcefully demonstrates, this constitutes a fundamental obstacle to the successful construction of a multicultural hexagon: 'force est de constater qu'en refusant d'aborder clairement le problème d'intégration des minorités visibles, ils contribuent à maintenir un système sclérosé, inadapté aux réalités multiraciales et multiculturelles de la France.'¹²

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¹¹ Ashcroft, p.214.

¹² Beyala, *Lettre d'une Afro-française*, p.52.

Book Reviews

Research in African Literatures, 30.4 (Winter 1999). Special Issue: *Drama and Performance*, ed. by John Conteh-Morgan and Tejumola Olaniyan.

The editors of this useful and clearly focused volume, based mainly on Anglophone Africa, state as their main objective to avoid the major pitfall in writing on African theatre, 'namely its inordinate attention to "drama"' (the Western-inspired literary play) 'at the expense of oral, non-literary modes of performance'. And indeed, all the contributors in one way or another succeed in shifting the focus from the written text to something broader, highlighting various manifestations of theatricality and performance art within society itself. This has the very real advantage of bringing out the power and relevance of the performance mode, putting it centre-stage as it were, and rescuing it from the elitist margins of what Soyinka calls the 'secure, opulent theatre' he experienced in exile.

This approach succeeds also in foregrounding in various ways the subversive role of theatre. Thus Soyinka, in a stimulating opening essay, charts the progress, from the Orisun theatre in post-independence Lagos, to the marginalised youth communities of Kingston, Jamaica, of what he terms 'Orisunitis', 'that universal and near incurable virus that lurks in theater as a social agent provocateur', challenging its assumptions as well as subverting its latent or real oppressiveness, at the same time as being a force for social cohesiveness. The use of the virus-image cannot fail, of course, to evoke Artaud's 'théâtre de la Peste'.

Where drama as text is considered, it is for its politically subversive role (Nicolas Brown on Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Loren Kruger and South African soap opera). Outside the theatre stage in the strict sense, and in line with the overall sense of the

volume, instances of performance as subversion are analysed in Pius Ngandu Nkashama's 'Theatricality and Social Mimodrama', where he underlines the importance of the idea of transgression in repressive societies, and the inviolability of theatrical space, while Daniel Avorgbedor gives an intriguing account of the Anlo-Ewe tradition of Haló, a performance event based on the stylised articulation of conflicts and hostilities within a particular society, and Joachim Fiebach, in 'Dimensions of Theatricality in Africa', demonstrates the vital role of performance as symbolic action in pre-literate societies, highlighting the phenomenon of 'inversion' which parallels the European carnival tradition. The translation of ritual into dramatic form, the rendering visible of the invisible spirit-world, is the key element in Sidibé Valy's presentation of the Bin Kadi-So Theatre, directed by Marie-José Hourantier and Wèrè Wèrè Liking, and of Marie-José Hourantier's own account of that theatre's adaptation of *Macbeth*. The essays are followed by a series of book reviews on similar subjects, highlighting the difficulty of defining the corpus.

If a reservation is to be expressed on this volume, it is that the approach leads to a certain Manicheism of perspective. The true nature of African theatre is portrayed as essentially oral, society-based and ritualistic, unlike the imported, Western, text-based theatre. But to see Western theatre as only text-based is to ignore centuries of popular theatre, much of which is alive and well, not to mention the impact of practitioners such as Artaud with his rejection of the text-based, psychological theatre inherited from Racine, and later Peter Brook and his experiments with epic (*The Mahabharata*), Minouchkine, etc. But overall this welcome collection should stimulate reflection on an important aspect of the theatrical tradition in Africa.

J.P. Little
Saint-Geniès de Malgoires
June 2002

Patrick Corcoran, *Le Pleurer-Rire* (Glasgow: Glasgow Introductory Guides to French Literature, 2002).

Glasgow Introductory Guides to French Literature have for a long time successfully combined critical acuity with the accessibility necessary for their purpose. They are also unusual in that they cover a broad range of texts, extending beyond the narrowly canonical. With the arguable exception of Camus however, Patrick Corcoran's study of Henri Lopes's *Le Pleurer-Rire* is the first Glasgow guide to take a non-European Francophone text as its subject. Obviously this development is to be welcomed, but as Corcoran correctly identifies on the first page of his study, it also gives rise to a paradox. Within a series of study guides to French literature, *Le Pleurer-Rire* is explicitly not French. But what is it? As Corcoran puts it, 'Reading the novel thus involves locating it' (pp.2-3).

Of course locating the novel may be an ongoing, open-ended process. To his credit, Corcoran resists the temptation to pin it down or to answer the questions he poses about the novel's origin and status. Instead he is happy to live with the paradoxes they imply and to explore how such paradoxes inform the dynamics of Lopes's novel. As we might expect from a novel entitled *Le Pleurer-Rire*, paradox is a central theme and Corcoran brings this out with great clarity. The three principal chapters of the book examine *Le Pleurer-Rire*'s examination of power politics, its narrative structure and its ludic qualities.

Corcoran argues that 'Power [...] is one of the central concerns of *Le Pleurer-Rire*' (p.15) and this is examined through the portrait of the dictator Bwakamabé. In some ways the novel is a familiar critique of the excesses of a post-colonial African state. Politics here lacks any ideological foundation, however, and is 'synonymous and coterminous with the private aspirations of Bwakamabé himself' (p.38). In many ways, Lopes (and Corcoran) suggests, there is something typically African about

this personalisation of the political process. At the same time the lack of ideological specificity means that the novel's thrust is more universally applicable.

A novel is not just a political tract however and Corcoran also provides a lucid account of the texts often bewildering narrative. *Le Pleurer-Rire* is composed of 57 tableaux with diverse narrative objects. It also articulates a variety of perspectives beyond those of Maître, the principal narrator. Corcoran demonstrates how *Le Pleurer-Rire* 'embraces complexity as a conscious technique' and how this complexity interacts with the novel's thematic polyvalence. Indeed, Corcoran goes on to suggest in his consideration of the novel's ludic qualities that this narrative heteroglossia is a crucial part of the novel's impact. *Le Pleurer-Rire* has a political thrust but it eschews easy answers in favour of inviting the reader to engage with complexity and relativity.

All in all, Corcoran provides a readable yet nuanced introduction to a difficult book. It would be foolish, perhaps, to pretend that *Le Pleurer-Rire* will ever be an easily accessible text, but now readers who are not familiar with African literature (and indeed those who are) may approach it with a little more confidence.

Jonathan Carr-West
London, March 2003

Books Received

Pierre Mille, *Barnavaux aux colonies, suivi d'Écrits sur la littérature coloniale*, présentation de Jennifer Yee (Paris: L'Harmattan, 'Autrement Mêmes', 2002)

Pascal Blanchard and Sandrine Lemaire, eds, *Culture coloniale: La France conquise par son empire, 1871-1931* (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2003)

Celia Britton, *Race and the Unconscious: Freudianism in French Caribbean Thought*, Research Monographs in French Studies, 12 (Oxford: Legenda, 2002)

Peter Davies, Catriona Cunningham, and Christina Johnson, eds, *Tous Azimuts 3: Contemporary Francophone Identities* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 2002)

Call for Papers

Postcolonialism: the new comparatism?
Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies

French Institute, London
28-29 November 2003

Confirmed keynote speakers: Emily Apter, Elleke Boehmer, Charles Forsdick, Graham Huggan

The field of Postcolonial Studies has brought together scholars working from a wide range of critical perspectives — Marxism, poststructuralism, feminism, etc. — in their analysis of 'texts' (literary or otherwise) from the colonial and post-colonial eras, and from different parts of the globe. Consequently, it seems that one cannot speak of postcolonialism as a distinct theoretical -ism designed to establish set parameters for the criticism of texts. Rather, the broad scope of Postcolonial Studies appears to offer the prospect of a new comparatism, which explores the effects/legacy of (primarily) European colonialism on texts from the formerly colonised world as well as from the former colonial centres. This potential for comparison is vast: it can involve an exploration of the complex relationship between (former) coloniser and (former) colonised; it can lead to a comparison of different 'metropolitan' visions of empire; or it can analyse the contrasts/comparisons between different colonies' experience of empire.

However, the comparatist promise of postcolonialism has not yet been fulfilled. Works of postcolonial criticism largely focus on texts from specific (ex)colonies, particularly those from the British Empire — as postcolonialism has been chiefly an English-language phenomenon —, which means that there has been little comparison 'across Empires'. Therefore, it is the aim of this

conference to explore the comparative dimensions of Postcolonial Studies, inviting scholars to analyse the extent to which postcolonial theories allow for transnational, transethnic, transcontinental, transhistorical comparison. In particular, we invite scholars to assess the applicability of a predominantly Anglophone postcolonial theory to Francophone contexts, exploring ways in which a genuine dialogue between Francophone and Anglophone postcolonial scholars might serve to create a more solid basis for intercultural comparison.

Papers will be organised around panels focusing on a number of key topics. These involve a number of 'regional' panels designed to provoke reflection on the comparative nature of any discourse invoking the singular entities known as the Caribbean, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa (we would also welcome proposals on other postcolonial Francophone spaces such as 'Indochina', and the Pacific/Indian oceans). We are particularly keen to invite proposals on the status of Canada as a 'unique' postcolonial space: can its history and culture be successfully compared to any other postcolonial society? The other panels invite proposals on 'theoretical' issues: we are particularly keen to receive proposals on theories of travel, exoticism, orientalism, and the postcolonial questioning of theories of gender construction.

Proposals — including title of paper, plus an abstract of about 300 words, in French or English — should be sent to the relevant panel chair. To obtain a full list of panels and convenors, please contact the conference organiser:

Dr David Murphy, French Section, School of Modern Languages, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA, UK. Tel. (00)(1786) 467535; Fax (00)(1786) 466255; E-Mail: d.f.murphy@stir.ac.uk.

The deadline for proposals is **Friday, 30 May 2003**. The conference committee will endeavour to inform all candidates of the success of their proposals by the end of June. A provisional conference programme should be available by mid-September.

20th/21st Century French and Francophone Studies International Colloquium

Diversity and Difference in France and the Francophone World

Winthrop-King Institute for Contemporary French and
Francophone Studies, Florida State University
1-4 April 2004

The myth of France as a culturally homogeneous space, long associated with the Jacobinist tradition at home and the *mission civilisatrice* overseas, stands in sharp contrast with the multiple forms of cultural diversity which traverse France and the wider French-speaking world. The rise of globalization and the perceived threat of Americanization have sharpened French thinking about what it is that makes France different if not indeed unique. At the same time, cultural diversity within France and the other French-speaking countries is now valorized in ways that were almost unthinkable a generation ago. Speakers at this, the 21st meeting of the 20th/21st Century French and Francophone Studies Colloquium, are invited to mark the coming of age of this major international gathering by exploring the rich dynamic of diversity and difference in France and the Francophone world.

Proposals for papers and panels on any topic relevant to the overall conference theme are warmly invited. Enquiries and proposals should be addressed to:

Dr Alec G. Hargreaves, Director, Winthrop-King Institute for Contemporary French and Francophone Studies, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 32306-1515, USA. E-mail: Ahargrea@mailers.fsu.edu. Deadline: 31 August 2003.

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n. 1, juin-juillet 2001: *La Littérature malgache*, textes réunis et présentés par Jean-Luc Raharimanana. Ont collaboré à ce numéro: Jean-Christophe Delmeule, Eugène Ebodé, Romuald Fonkoua, Danielle Nivo Galibert, Laurence Ink, Jean-Louis Joubert, Boris Lazic, Martine Mathieu-Job, Jean-Luc Raharimanana, Liliane Ramarosoa, Marie-Christine Rochmann.

n.2, juin-juillet 2002: *Aperçus du Noir : regards blancs sur l'Autre*, textes réunis et présentés par Roger Little. Ont collaboré à ce numéro: Jean-Claude Blachère, Sylvie Chalaye, Jean-François Durand, Elizabeth Ezra, Rita Hermon-Belot, Roger Little, Daouda Mar, David Murphy, Claude Thiébaud, David Williams.

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