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Editor's note
To Kate Marsh

I'm beginning with the same words as Jacqueline Frost's following article: 'This time last year'. This time last year, I was doing exactly the same thing: I was typing up my very first note for my very first issue of the *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, the editorship of which I had just taken over from Professor Kate Marsh, the journal's founding editor. I was nervously trying to find words that would express my gratitude for her trust in me and for everything I had learned from her, but also to emphasize how I am planning to carry on her work and to pursue aims that I knew were important to her: to transnationalize the field, to support postgraduate and early-career research and to make cutting-edge research widely accessible through open access. A couple of months later, Kate informed me of her terminal illness (in typical fashion, she dedicated two unsentimental lines about this in her email and quickly moved on to ask me about the state of the funding application I was preparing with her at the time and how my preparation for the next two issues of the *Bulletin* was going). And then, what in retrospect felt like the blink of an eye, I received the news of her passing away.

Charles Forsdick has written a wonderful tribute to Kate, which can be accessed here: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/modern-languages-and-cultures/staff/kate-marsh-tribute>

Instead of attempting to find new words to describe how unique and irreplaceable Kate was and while this issue is dedicated to her, there will be a special issue of the *Bulletin*, which will feature a reprint of one of Kate's latest articles, plus a selection of personal essays and articles from former collaborators and doctoral students. This special issue will be published for this year's conference of the Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies (15–16 November 2019), of which Kate was president (2017–2019).

My first editor's note also included saying goodbye to Khalid Lyamlahy, who had worked with Kate as the Book Reviews Editor of *BFPS* and who is off to pastures new in the US. With this issue, I am delighted to introduce the *Bulletin's* new Book Reviews Editor. Jemima Paine is currently a doctoral student at the University of Liverpool and this issue's Book Reviews section demonstrates the fantastic job she has been doing.

Bonne lecture,

SARAH ARENS
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Experiments in Political Inheritance: Jean Genet's Legacy in Post-Algerian France

This time last year, I am sitting in the living room of a house on the outskirts of Rabat, Morocco. My friend and I are visiting his older sister, a high-school Arabic teacher. We show her our copy of the bilingual French-Arabic edition of Jean Genet's *Quatre heures à Chatila*, recently acquired from the Librairie des Colonnes in Tangiers.¹ Written in 1982, *Chatila* is a first-hand testimony of the day after the massacre of thousands of Palestinians in the refugee camps of Beirut by a ring-wing Christian militia close to the ruling Kataeb Party in collusion with the Israel Defense Forces.² My friend's sister described how, at the time, the world knew that Ariel Sharon and the Israeli State were murderers at Sabra and Shatila and the world did nothing. Genet wrote as a European witness to an ongoing campaign of violence that the Western World had then and has since only wished to wash its hands of. It is for that precise reason, she told us, *that Jean Genet is still alive*.

Flying via Fez, my friend returned home to the predominantly Arab working-class neighbourhood of Empalot in Toulouse. I return home to my apartment, shared with other graduate students, in the seventeenth arrondissement of Paris. The Parisian metro had been up until recently awash in a campaign of Jean-Paul Gaultier 'Le Mâle' cologne advertisements, whose hunky shirtless sailors, young and tattooed, incarnate an homage that Gaultier has made consistently throughout his career to Genet.³ In particular, 'Le Mâle' billboards and commercials play on the proletarian homoeroticism deployed in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1982 film adaption of *Querelle de Brest*.⁴ Gaultier's appropriation of Genet's aesthetic playbook has the unfortunate effect of tying 'bad' sailors like *Querelle* to essentially French images of white masculinity by bolstering the notion of a by-gone time of masculine normativity tied to military labour. Gaultier's recuperated working-class figures, therefore, undo Genet's own gesture of perverting the classically French *marin*, through sodomy and murder, until he becomes liberated of the moral trappings of society. An article for *AnOther Magazine* from 2011, titled 'Jean Genet: The Quintessential Frenchman', describes Genet's influence on gay icons like Gaultier, David Bowie and others.⁵ Upon hearing of his election as 'quintessential Frenchman', we can imagine Genet turning over in his grave on the Moroccan coast not far from Rabat.

The double life that Genet led between France and the Arab world, which produced in the same year *Quatre heures à Chatila* and Fassbinder's *Querelle*, is still with us today, in the fashion industry's sexualized still lives and in the uncanny assertions of almost perfect strangers from countries one visits as an occidental tourist. Whether we are looking to learn from his anti-bourgeois vision of homosexual freedom or from his militant solidarity with Black and Arab revolutionaries, we, without a doubt, inhabit the future Genet's work and person sought to enunciate. This is especially clear when considering the contemporary French political landscape in which 'universalized' gay citizenship is seen as irreconcilable with 'communitarian' Muslim trans-

¹ Jean Genet, *Quatre heures à Chatila. Edition bilingue français-arabe* (Tangiers: Librairie des Colonnes Éditions, 2015).

² The Kataeb militia, or Kataeb Regulatory Forces, was the paramilitary element of the right-wing Lebanese Christian Kataeb Party, or Phalange Party. Israel Defense Forces had invaded Lebanon in 1978 during the Lebanese Civil War, and again in 1982. The Phalangist Party was in power at the time of the Sabra and Shatila massacre and, like their Israeli allies, wished to rout out PLO fighters from Lebanon.

³ See Miles Aldridge's 2016 'Le Mâle & Classique' commercial 'Welcome to the Factory', which was paired with a Paris Metro advertisement campaign that ran through spring 2017 (cf. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iyyPzttSx>> [last accessed 24 October 2018]).

⁴ Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Querelle*, film, 1982. Based on Jean Genet, *Querelle de Brest* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947).

⁵ Laura Havlin, 'Jean Genet: The Quintessential Frenchman', *AnOther Magazine*, 2011

<<http://www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/1501/jean-genet-the-quintessential-frenchman>> [last accessed 24 October 2018].

nationalism.⁶ But despite the co-existence of these two Genetian genealogies, few recent attempts have been made on the part of white queers or Maghrebi anti-imperialist militants in France to make these parallel legacies converge. Recent Anglophone scholarship, however, takes up these two sides of Genet in order to interrogate, on the one hand, the imbricated historical nature of communitarian social movements, and on the other, to critique the academic idealization of deviance that Genet's example has conjured. To use the author's metaphor from *Un Captif amoureux*, I too wish to harvest Genet's time in order to ask what political stakes have been or can be reaped from the spaces between his lumpenproletarian queerness and his anti-colonial militancy.⁷ It is from this point of departure that I hope to demonstrate the present need for a critical and multi-directional approach to the convergence of queer, working-class, and anti-racist politics that Genet's imperfect example illuminates.

In *Sex, France and Arab Men*, Todd Shepard begins by claiming that 'Algerian questions — and answers — made the sexual revolution French', spearheading a new wave of scholarship that views 1970s sexual-liberation struggles in the *métropole* as a direct development of 'worldwide anticolonial movements,' especially those of the Arab world.⁸ Within this conjuncture, Genet emerged as a major European voice of the struggle against imperialism, travelling with and writing in support of the Black Panther Party and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, both beginning in 1970. The unlikely connection of Genet, widely regarded as a homosexual outlaw, to the vanguard of Third World Liberation movements has engendered a mixed reception of the writer's legacy. Shepard's project, which peerlessly historicizes links between French Gay Liberation and the Algerian Revolution, is optimistic regarding the efforts of homosexual revolutionaries to learn from the anti-colonial struggle and to deploy certain of its tenets within the context of radical gay movements. However, other recent takes on the utility of Genet's legacy for conjugating queer and anti-racist politics are less confident in a transparent alliance of the subjugated.

Having set out to write a positive account of Genet's anti-racist activism from a Queer Studies perspective, Kadji Amin explains that his 2017 book *Disturbing Attachments* emerged when 'Genet spoiled [my] own investments in him'.⁹ According to Amin,

[w]hen Genet is invoked in left criticism [...] scholars gesture toward Genet's iconic and exceptional status in order to invoke the imaginary of political coalition across difference and inequality, despite all the dangers they know are attendant on such difficult crossings. For to do the labor of analyzing the complex relationship between Genet's racialized erotics and his antiracist politics would necessarily risk sullyng one of the very few concrete representatives of the ideal of an interracial coalition of the oppressed.¹⁰

Observing other scholars' suggestions that Genet's experiences as an orphan, prisoner, and homosexual allowed him to empathize with the violence of racial imperialism, Amin maintains that '[w]hen Genet's racialized eroticism *is* addressed in criticism, it is often in order to redeem it via a temporal progress narrative that poses it as *leading to* principled political coalition,' such that the end justifies the means.¹¹ Following Amin, I posit that Genet's articulation of a queer underworld of dereliction did not somehow transubstantiate itself into serious anti-racist and Third

⁶ For the now-classic articulation of this problematic see Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) and for a French-specific perspective see Denis M. Provencher, *Queer Maghrebi French: Language, Temporalities, Transfiliations* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017).

⁷ Genet, *Un Captif amoureux* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p. 140: 'Depuis mon arrivée à Ajloun, le temps subissait une curieuse transformation. Chaque moment était devenu "précieux", mais précieux au point d'être si brillant qu'on en aurait dû ramasser les morceaux: au temps de la cueillette venait de succéder la cueillette du temps'.

⁸ Todd Shepard, *Sex, France and Arab Men (1962-1979)* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2017), p. 1.

⁹ Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 81; Amin's italics.

World commitments.¹² Neither would I argue that Genet's late-life and almost total submission to the political combat of Black and Brown people effaces the preoccupations of sexual transgression, betrayal and evil that fuelled his literature.¹³ But these two images of Genet, as the juxtaposition of *Querelle* and *Chatila* makes evident, do not simply co-exist. Rather, they are mutually shot through with the historical meanings and imaginative possibilities that the statuses of homosexual criminal and anti-colonial ally produce. What in *Querelle* allows us to rethink *Chatila*, and what in *Chatila* proposes we reconsider *Querelle*? Perhaps by critically negotiating the irreconcilability that these two projects represent, rather than redeeming or denouncing it, we in fact inherit tools for forms of future solidarity.

The sexual exoticism of Genet's early novels, when compounded with his personal preference for Arab men (evidenced by his two long-term lovers Abdallah Bentaga and Mohommed El Katrani), points to a Genet whose orientalist desire complicates our historical vision of a radical white anti-colonialist. On the other hand, equally documented are the risks that Genet took in order to witness, decry, and produce material aid for the injustices faced by Palestinians, Black Americans, the Moroccan peasantry, and African workers in France. Beyond Shepard's optimism and Amin's pessimism, I propose a third way that questions the value of allowing these two images of Genet to dissolve each other, either by exalting one in order to forget the other, or by seeing in their contradictory nature a lack of utility. Rather than suggesting the idealization or de-idealization of Genet's person and work, I am interested in asking what political futures are imaginable based *on the relation* between Genet's life and his legacy. This article will attempt an experiment in political inheritance by examining the image of Genet who carelessly — and at times cruelly — loved young Arab men alongside the image of Genet who perilously wove his life into anti-racist struggles. To this end, I will suggest that Genet's legacy in France, despite its failings *or* glorification, reveals the stakes of a necessary political convergence in the present. After considering this problematic through materials contemporary with Genet's life among both French and Arab intellectuals, I will discuss current perspectives on Genet in France, through a comparison of the work of Houria Bouteldja and Abdellah Taïa and conclude with reflections on a politics that can be gleaned from what Genet has left with us. In order to let *Chatila* and *Querelle* productively coincide, I propose we move back from 1982 into what Shepard calls the 'French post-Algerian 1970s', a political landscape rife with the parallel events of Algerian post-coloniality and nascent French Gay Liberation.

When considering interest in Genet among the French homosexual left, it is difficult to avoid his 1964 comment in an interview for *Playboy Magazine* that,

peut-être que si je n'avais pas fait l'amour avec des Algériens, je n'aurais pas été en faveur du F.L.N. Mais non, je l'aurais été sans doute de toute façon. Mais c'est peut-être la pédérasie qui m'a fait comprendre que les Algériens étaient des hommes comme les autres.¹⁴

The twelfth issue of Felix Guattari's revue *Recherches* is testament to the fantasy that, in the words of Amin, produces an equation where 'homosexual oppression + postcolonial interracial sex = coalitional solidarity'.¹⁵ Entitled 'Trois milliards de pervers', an early page in the special issue reads:

¹² Ibid, pp. 81–83. The author's examples for this tendency are Edward Said, Jérôme Neutres, Jarrod Hayes and Maxime Cervulle and Nick Rees-Roberts.

¹³ Jean Genet, *Les Paravents* (Décines: M. Barbezat, 1976). While Genet's novels are infamous for advancing an ethics of evil and betrayal in story-worlds populated by sex workers, transvestites and pederasts, even his last piece of theater, *Les Paravents*, set in the midst of a colonial war in a nameless Arab country, maintains Genet's emphasis on evil and betrayal as a positive and revolutionary attribute. The main character of the play, Saïd, betrays his compatriots to the invading army, which is lauded as essential to an uncompromised collective authenticity by other 'Arab' characters.

¹⁴ Jean Genet, 'L'entretien avec Madeleine Gobeil', in *L'ennemi déclaré (textes et entretiens)*, ed. by Albert Dichy (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1991), p. 24.

¹⁵ Amin, p. 78.

‘Vivent Nos Amants de Berbérie’, under a margin decked with script from the Berber alphabet. Here, contributors note, ‘[n]ous les homosexuels qui avons pris la parole dans ce numéro de “Recherches”, nous sommes solidaires de leur lutte. Parce que nous avons avec eux des relations d’amour. Parce que leur libération sera la nôtre’.¹⁶ One should also recall in this connection the mise-en-scène of orientalizing sex tropes and proposals of solidarity between Gays and Arabs in Lionel Soukaz and Guy Hocquenghem’s 1979 film, *Race d’Ep ! : Un siècle d’images de l’homosexualité*.¹⁷ This heady mix of racial fetishism and coalitional political aspiration would become the standard modality through which Le Front homosexuel d’action révolutionnaire (FHAR) understood links between the social processes of decolonization and sexual liberation in France in the early 1970s.¹⁸

Alongside right-wing sex panic about Algerian male immigrants, this phenomenon is the subject of Shepard’s 2017 book and his 2012 article, “‘Something Notably Erotic’: Politics, “Arab Men,” and Sexual Revolution in Post-decolonization France, 1962–1974’. Herein, the author argues that ‘after Algerian independence, what I term the erotics of Algerian difference proved useful to deeply political efforts to grapple with wide-ranging uncertainties about gendered and class identities and the postcolonial boundaries of the French nation’.¹⁹ While Shepard’s discussion of Genet largely centers on what his contemporaries made of him, he observes that Genet’s provocative remark on the FLN, republished by FHAR militants in an issue of the magazine, *Tout!*

suggested that revolutionary political understandings and actions could result from thinking about sexual connections — such as that between the French writer and his Algerian lovers — because they established bonds between types of people whom oppressive social structures at once defined as wholly distinct (repressed homosexuals and colonized Algerians) and worked to keep apart.²⁰

However, proceeding with good faith in the political fantasies of bourgeois Arab-fetishizing Maoists could fail to consider attempts at a queer anti-racism that did not see sexual exoticism as a solution for a unified front against imperialism. For if Genet is remembered for his part in Third-World struggles, it was not from cruising Algerians in public toilets in Paris (a form of possible anti-colonial solidarity recommended by the FHAR), but rather from putting himself completely at the disposal of Black and Arab militants, without directly putting the question of homosexuality on the table. By directly, I do not mean to reference Genet being high on Nembutal and dancing in a negligée for Panther leader David Hilliard, as recounted by Edmund White in his biography of the former, but rather assuming, as the FHAR did, an abstract rapprochement between gay issues and anti-racism before it could be productively elaborated through political action.²¹

According to White, while Genet did not tell the Black Panthers that he was gay, they quickly figured it out and then seemed rather indifferent.²² During his activity with the BPP, Genet would become a sort of ‘homo-whisperer’ for the Panthers, who asked him to explain the political contours of homosexuality, a world they perceived as completely alien, and which required cultural translation. Genet explains in an interview to White that,

¹⁶ ‘Trois milliards de pervers: La grande encyclopédie des homosexualités’, *Recherches* 12 (1973): n.p.

¹⁷ Lionel Soukaz and Guy Hocquenghem, *Race d’Ep ! : Un siècle d’images de l’homosexualité*, film, 1979.

¹⁸ See Shepard’s discussion of *Race d’Ep* and the FHAR’s role in ‘Trois milliards de pervers’ in *Sex, France and Arab Men*, pp. 68–72; 220–221.

¹⁹ Shepard, “‘Something Notably Erotic’: Politics, “Arab Men,” and Sexual Revolution in Post-decolonization France, 1962–1974’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 84 (2012): pp. 80–115 (p. 85).

²⁰ Shepard, *Sex, France and Arab Men*, p. 65.

²¹ Edmund White, *Genet: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993). According to White, ‘Genet was careful not to be drawn into discussions of the women’s movement and gay rights. At this point he still conceived of both movements as a personal struggle in overcoming psychological oppression caused by societal taboos, which he distinguished from the collective and physical oppression and danger experienced by the Panthers’ (p. 527). The Nembutal-negligée episode mentioned above can be found in White (cf. p. 529).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 529.

after public demonstrations by groups of American homosexuals and women's liberation people, the Black Panthers wrote to me, asking for an article on homosexuality because it was a subject they didn't understand very well and one in which I was better qualified to speak than they.²³

Huey Newton would quickly thereafter publish a paper entitled 'The Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements, August 15, 1970' that outlined a new Panther position expressing solidarity with feminists and homosexuals, shifting the criteria from solidarity among oppressed identities to solidarity among fellow revolutionaries.²⁴ This position was, of course, not the consensus within the Party, while most Panthers saw the fact of Genet's presence, despite or in spite of his homosexuality, as genuine and useful.²⁵ In fact, the contrast between some Panther's 'indifference' to Genet's queerness and Eldridge Cleaver's denunciation of James Baldwin's homosexuality as a 'hatred for Blacks' is striking.²⁶ Did Genet's whiteness paradoxically allow for his acceptance among the Panthers? This is particularly curious when we recall that Cleaver's view of Baldwin's sexuality was linked to a 'shameful, fanatical, fawning, sycophantic love of the whites'.²⁷

Like the Panthers, Genet's Arab comrades in the 1970s and 80s offer few clues for understanding the nuances involved in a famous gay writer committing a decade of his life activity to the struggles of the PLO and immigrant workers in France. Edward Said is one of the few Arab intellectuals contemporary with the French writer who attempts to take on, from a political perspective, the contradictions that Genet's life involved. Said recounts first seeing Genet speak at Columbia University in 1970 in support of the BPP, where his own student served as Genet's simultaneous translator.²⁸ The two men met properly a few years later in Beirut, where Genet was already active in the PLO. While Said admits that 'Genet did allow his love for Arabs to be his approach to them', he asks if this 'love for the Palestinians [...] amounts to a kind of overturned or exploded Orientalism? Or is it a sort of reformulated colonialist love of handsomely dark young men?' Said responds with a clear 'no,' stating that 'he entered the Arab space and lived in it not as an investigator of exoticism but as someone for whom the Arabs had actuality and a presence [...] even though he was, and remained, different.'²⁹ In these comments, is Said committing the error discussed by Amin above of a linear temporal approach from exoticism to allyship? Or is he proposing that Genet's love for 'handsomely dark young men' can in fact co-exist with a form of political commitment that is not sexually instrumental?

By rejecting the FHAR's equation of interracial sex leading to coalition, we may, following Said, venture a reading of Genet's legacy that does not reduce his sexuality to his activism or vice versa. But what if Genet's militancy, especially when it involved extreme action, was in fact predicated on a form of desire?

It is worth recalling that Genet's late-life political commitments went far beyond the plausible limits of being *about* orientalist fantasy. As Said writes, 'to speak here as a Palestinian, I believe that Genet's choice of Palestine in the 1970s and 1980s was the most dangerous political choice, the scariest journey of all'.³⁰ Indeed, what sexual desire, however strong, could led Genet

²³ Ibid., p. 529–530.

²⁴ Huey P. Newton, 'The Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements, August 15, 1970,' *The Huey P. Newton Reader*. Ed. by David Hilliard and Donald Weise (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), pp. 157–159.

²⁵ For an example of broad appreciation of Genet's work for BPP among the Panthers, see Moroccan visual artist Bouchra Khalili's 2018 video *Twenty-Two Hours* and 2019 exposition catalogue 'The Radical Ally'. Both explore Genet's witnessing of the literal trials and tribulations of the BPP, particularly from the perspective of the Boston Chapter and one of its leaders, Doug Miranda. Bouchra Khalili, *Twenty-Two Hours*, Video, 2018. Xavier Nuevo. *The Radical Ally*, co-edited by Bouchra Khalili. (Ciudad de México: Gat Negro Ediciones and Instituto des investigations independents, 2019).

²⁶ Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul On Ice* (New York: Delta, 1992), p. 129.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 124.

²⁸ Edward Said, 'On Jean Genet's Late Works' *Grand Street*, 36 (1990): pp. 26–42 (p. 27).

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 33–34.

³⁰ Said, p. 38.

in the early 1970s to push forward a vain assassination plot against Morocco's King Hassan II?³¹ It is one thing to sleep in a tent with the fedayeen in Jordan for six months but quite another to implicate oneself in the murder of an absolute monarch for the good of the common people of Morocco, living under a semi-feudal and corrupt dynasty.³² But as Amin points out, Genet did at the time publicly admit to what he called the 'intense erotic charge' that Black Americans and Arabs engendered for him.³³ In a 1975 interview with the gay German novelist and ethnographer, Hubert Fichte, Genet reflects that

[c]e qui est plus difficilement avouable, c'est que les Panthers sont des Noirs américains, les Palestiniens sont des Arabes. J'aurais du mal à expliquer pourquoi les choses se font comme ça, mais ces deux groupements ont une charge érotique très forte. Je me demande si j'aurais pu adhérer à des mouvements révolutionnaires qui soient aussi justes que — je les trouve très justes, le mouvement des Panthers et le mouvement des Palestiniens — mais cette adhésion, cette sympathie, est-ce qu'elle n'est pas commandée en même temps par la charge érotique que représente le monde arabe dans sa totalité ou le monde noir américain, pour moi, pour ma sexualité?³⁴

What is curious is Genet's own analysis of this drama in which the justice represented by the Panthers and the PLO coincides with a mysterious attraction, one that he must admit to without concluding that it be the prime mover of his activism. For Genet, a moral or political attitude is never radically disarticulated from the sensual aspect of collective struggle. The link between that sensuality and the righteousness of the political claims it is contiguous with are not something that Genet attempts to completely disambiguate. In *Chatila*, he writes:

[]e choix que l'on fait d'une communauté privilégiée [...] ce choix s'opère par la grâce d'une adhésion non raisonnée, non que la justice n'y ait sa part, mais cette justice et toute la défense de cette communauté se font en vertu d'un attrait sentimental, peut-être même sensible, sensuel; je suis français, mais entièrement, sans jugement, je défends les Palestiniens. Ils ont le droit pour eux puisque je les aime. Mais les aimerais-je si l'injustice n'en faisait pas un peuple vagabond?³⁵

Genet's love for the Palestinians releases them from the necessity of moral perfection, allowing their political desires the right to exist based solely on his affection for them. But this affection is not itself groundless as it is connected to the particularities of their struggle. In a certain way, Genet's refusal to delink desire and justice in the case of anti-colonialism foreshadows many contemporary questions: How are politics to proceed in the context of asymmetrical power relations, the opaqueness of which pass through the dynamics of desire, fetishism, roles and representations? Is there a way for any desire, however ideologically correct it wishes to be, to completely bypass the erotic charge that society ascribes so heavily to difference: to gendered difference, but also to racial difference? Is there a way to divorce comradesly love from the subterranean sexual arithmetic that structures all political milieus?

In the mid-1970s, Genet involved himself in 'unspectacular' forms of solidarity, such as his 1974 radio program on *France Culture* called 'Sur deux ou trois livres dont personne n'a jamais parlé', where he indignantly discussed the tepid reception by French intellectuals of the novels of Tahar Ben Jelloun, Ahmed, Nabile Farès, and Khaïr-Eddine. Herein, Genet writes that '[c]es voix qui brûlent avec des phrases presque en lambeaux, si les intellectuels refusent de les entendre, je

³¹ Amin, p. 144.

³² White, p. 553. The fedayeen refers to the freedom-fighters of the PLO.

³³ Amin., p. 81.

³⁴ Genet, 'L'entretien avec Hubert Fichte', in *L'ennemi déclaré (textes et entretiens)*, ed. by Albert Dichy (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1991) pp. 141–176 (p.156).

³⁵ Genet, *Chatila*, p. 29.

demande aux ouvriers de les écouter'.³⁶ Genet's public camaraderie to Arab writers in France is returned to him often during that decade. In 1979, Ben Jelloun conducts a second interview with him on the subject of recent changes to French policy that would further limit immigrants' rights, in which the former wistfully asks Genet: 'La France, est-ce un rêve ou un malentendu?'³⁷ Published in *Le Monde*, a brief editorial remark on the piece states that 'Jean Genet est assez indifférent quand on lui parle de ses livres ou de son théâtre. S'il apprend que les travailleurs immigrés courent un danger, il réagit'.³⁸ Having famously told Ben Jelloun that he 'never again' wished to speak about his own books upon their first meeting, we might imagine that this self-indifference struck the Moroccan writer as Genet's articulation of a hopeful move beyond literature entirely, into the realm of politics.³⁹ But lamenting in 2011, Ben Jelloun writes of Genet, '[a]ujourd'hui il est beaucoup moins lu [...]. Même dans les pays arabes il subit cet oubli. Même les Palestiniens ne se souviennent plus de lui. Il n'y a peut-être qu'au Maroc qu'il se passe quelque chose de sincère et de mystérieux de cet écrivain et de cet homme'.⁴⁰

While Ben Jelloun claims that Genet's legacy only carries a continued importance in Morocco, the French writer has lately re-emerged as a figure of reference in anti-imperialist circles among Maghrebi writers and activists in France. In opposition to his deployment in contemporary queer culture, for Houria Bouteldja and for Abdellah Taïa respectively, Genet's white anti-colonial allyship adumbrates a radical rejection of whiteness and a possible queer *arabité*. Theorist Houria Bouteldja of the Parti des Indigènes de la République counterposes Genet to the benevolent White-Father intellectuals of decolonial alliance, such as Jean-Paul Sartre.⁴¹ She quotes a single text of Genet's at length, an interview he conducted with Bertrand Poirot-Delpech in 1982, where, at hearing that France has abolished capital punishment, Genet comments that

[t]ant que la France ne fera pas cette politique qu'on appelle Nord-Sud, tant qu'elle ne se préoccupera pas davantage des travailleurs immigrés ou des anciennes colonies, la politique française ne m'intéressera pas du tout. Qu'on coupe des têtes ou pas à des hommes blancs, ça ne m'intéresse pas énormément.⁴²

This disinterest in white French politics is seen by Bouteldja as Genet's response to what she calls 'la proposition invisible faite aux Blancs par les militants radicaux de la cause noire, de la cause palestinienne, de la cause du tiers-monde'.⁴³ She claims that Genet knew that each time an *indigène* takes a position against the white man, this is at the same time an opportunity for whites to save themselves, concluding '[c]ar si votre histoire vous a faits Blancs, rien ne vous oblige à le rester'.⁴⁴ The uses of Genet by Bouteldja, which are representative of a certain anti-imperialist current in France, do not involve themselves with the question of Genet's homosexuality or his auto-interrogation of his own orientalist admiration for the Arab world. Curiously, Bouteldja employs Genet, James Baldwin, and Audre Lorde as her major historical interlocutors in a text on the prospect of revolutionary love without addressing the specific meanings of homosexual desire among these three figures. In *Les Blancs, les Juifs et nous*, the author's stance on homosexuality resides within a provocative pose which states that, until the imperialists admit to their war crimes, one

³⁶ Genet, 'Sur deux ou trois livres dont personne n'a jamais parlé', *L'ennemi déclaré (textes et entretiens)*, ed. by Albert Dichy. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1991) pp. 121–124 (p.121).

³⁷ Genet, 'Entretien avec Tahar Ben Jelloun', in *L'ennemi déclaré (textes et entretiens)*, ed. by Albert Dichy (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1991): p. 207–211 (p. 209).

³⁸ Ibid., p. 394.

³⁹ White, p. 583.

⁴⁰ Tahar Ben Jelloun, 'Lettre à Jean Genet', *Nejma* (2010-2011): pp. 11–16 (p. 16).

⁴¹ Houria Bouteldja, *Les Blancs, les Juifs et nous: Vers une politique de l'amour révolutionnaire* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2016.) p. 16.

⁴² Ibid., p. 20.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 40.

might meet their lie with the lie that some do not speak about homosexuality because there are no homosexuals in the Arab world: '[u]n mensonge artisanal face à un mensonge imperial.'⁴⁵

The work of writer and filmmaker Abdellah Taïa, who lives in Paris and is known as the currently only openly-gay high-profile Moroccan writer, represents a counterpoint to this position. In 2011, he curated a special issue of the Tangiers-based literary revue *Nejma* entitled 'Jean Genet, un saint marocain'. In his presentation for the collection, Taïa writes that '[a]u Maroc, quelque chose est en train de se produire autour de lui en ce moment [...]. Depuis le 15 avril 1986, il repose dans le cimetière espagnol de la ville de Larache. C'est là qu'il continue d'écrire et de crier. C'est là que la transformation et la prophétie sont en train de se réaliser'.⁴⁶ Taïa will again say in an interview in 2014 for *Les Inrockuptibles* that

Jean Genet est en train de devenir un saint au Maroc, d'une manière mystérieuse, fascinante, magique. Il n'est pas célébré là-bas pour ces livres mais pour les souvenirs qu'il a laissés dans les mémoires des gens simples, les pauvres. C'est ma mère, femme analphabète, qui m'a parlé dans les années 80 de Jean Genet.⁴⁷

More than any contemporary figure, Taïa attempts a synthesis of Genet-the-homosexual-outlaw and Genet-the-anticolonial-ally. His published statements on Genet's 'Moroccan sainthood' are written in a mode of exultation that leaves ambiguous his perspective on Genet's history of and preference for Arab lovers. There is a sense in Taïa's engagement with Genet that the content of his books matters less than the fact that he was a homosexual writer who often chose to live among Arabs. In 'Jean Genet et les hommes arabes', a short text from late 2018, Taïa considers the Genet of a famous photograph taken of the very old writer in a park in Rabat in 1985. Reflecting on the image, Taïa asks,

[m]ais que cherchait-il exactement dans ce pays colonisé par la France de 1912 au 1956? Fuir Paris et ses milieux littéraires étouffants? Chercher l'amour, le sexe des hommes arabes, comme tant d'autres écrivains occidentaux [...] ? Devenir ami tendre avec un jeune homosexuel et l'aider à survivre à l'homophobie généralisée? Oublier Abdallah le funambule qui l'aimait et qui impitoyablement abandonné par lui, avait fini par se suicider?⁴⁸

Here, Taïa addresses the contradictory nature of Genet's relationships with Arab men, citing the French writer's variegated compassion and cruelty, framed by the non-rhetorical question, 'mais que fait-il là?'.⁴⁹ Rather than proposing an answer to this question or making a judgment, Taïa explains that he used to pass the park of Genet's photo each day on his way to the university. There, he prepared 'to steal power' from the enemy by learning his language, divulging that, '[J]e gay que je suis n'a jamais rêvé d'émancipation. Elle n'existe réellement nulle part de toute façon. Je voulais juste devenir comme Jean Genet, un bon voleur'.⁵⁰

While both Bouteldja and Taïa speak to the Maghreb from their positions in the *métropole*, it seems that the stakes of their public comments shine light on the particularly French dynamics of colonial cosmopolitan spaces where cultural contact and continued racial imperialism generate a series of dilemmas for naming forms of difference across geopolitical contexts. In public comments from 2017 concerning homosexuality and the Arab world, Taïa observes that the

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 43

⁴⁶ Abdellah Taïa, 'Presentation', *Nejma*, (2010–2011), pp. 5–6 (p. 5).

⁴⁷ Taïa, 'Abdellah Taïa: L'espoir n'est pas complètement mort dans le cœur des Arabes', *Les Inrockuptibles* (2014) <<https://www.lesinrocks.com/2014/12/23/style/style/abdellah-taia-lespoir-nest-pas-complementement-mort-dans-le-coeur-des-arabes/>> [last accessed 24 October 2018].

⁴⁸ Abdellah Taïa, 'Jean Genet et les hommes arabes', *Archives des mouvements LGBT+ : Une histoire des luttes de 1890 à nos jours*, ed. by Antoine Idier (Paris: Éditions Textuel, 2018): p. 71 .

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

prohibition against homosexual practices was introduced by French and Spanish colonizers and is thus a result of the sexual mores and social codes nineteenth-century Europe.⁵¹ But the non-existence of the social category of the homosexual in classical Arabic and the colonial character of Moroccan legal prohibition does not stop Taïa from adopting what Bouteldja describes as the occidental identity of the homosexual and the occidental theatre of *le coming-out*.⁵² In a text published on her party's official website several years before her book, Bouteldja asserts 'qu'il peut y avoir des pratiques homosexuelles effectivement dans les quartiers ou ailleurs mais que ça ne se manifeste pas par une revendication identitaire politique'.⁵³ The notion that Arabs in France do not claim a sexual identity even when engaging in homosexual practices replays, for different reasons, the 1970s trope found in the pages of FHAR publications that Arab men were not homosexuals even when having gay sex.⁵⁴ While it is indisputable that Bouteldja has spearheaded 'the necessary task of confronting and critiquing France's Republican political culture', her lack of affirmative options leaves queer Arab desire as marked by an Occidentalism of sexual identity and the specter of colonial assimilation by Western gayness.⁵⁵ To use Bouteldja's phrasing, we might venture a serious question: if your history has made it difficult to name and empower homosexual desires, what obliges you to stay that way?

Without denying the creative provisionality and rhetorical power of identity, evidenced in the reappropriation of the term 'indigène' from nineteenth-century colonial legal code,⁵⁶ I question whether trying to prove the existence of a queer Arab identity in the French banlieue or in the Maghreb is not a matter of sociological verifiability beyond the powers of many making claims thereof.⁵⁷ What is verifiable, in this connection, is the militancy of queer and racialized people in France, as well as their material and discursive struggles, which reject both the homonationalism of imperial states and the 'blanctriarchy' of the white community.⁵⁸ For example, the work of queer Arab artist Tarek Lakhri seeks to experiment with the politicisation of intimacy, using the conceit of the imaginary queer club to consider the possibility of emancipatory spaces that necessarily conjugate several cultures and languages. In his recent gallery exposition, *Chameleon*

⁵¹ Taïa, 'L'interdit de l'homosexualité n'existait pas dans le monde arabe', *Le Point* (2017)

<https://www.lepoint.fr/culture/abdellah-taia-pour-ecrire-il-faut-controler-un-peu-sa-propre-folie-18-02-2017-2105816_3.php> [last accessed 28 October 2018].

⁵² Bouteldja, p. 80. 'Entendre un lascar faire son coming out: un kiff de blanc civilisateur, un aboutissement pour l'indigène retardataire. Car pour un khoroto*, faire de sa sexualité une identité sociale et politique, c'est entrer dans la modernité par la grande porte.' For an in-depth discussion on Taïa's coming-out in the context of Moroccan LGBT politics and of his vision of 'homosexualité à la marocaine', see Tina Dransfeldt Christensen, 'Breaking the Silence: Between Literary Representation and LGBT Activism. Abdellah Taïa as Author and Activist', *Expressions maghrébines*, 16 (2017): pp. 107–125 (pp. 113–125).

⁵³ Houria Bouteldja, 'De l'importance stratégique des discordances temporelles: Universalisme gay, homoracisme et "mariage pour tous"', *Parti Indigène de la République* (2013) <<http://indigenes-republique.fr/universalisme-gay-homoracisme-et-mariage-pour-tous-2>> [last accessed 28 October 2018].

⁵⁴ See Amin's discussion of 'Les Arabes et nous' in 'Trois milliards de pervers', pp. 87–88: '[W]hen Arab sexual partners defy Orientalist stereotypes, they are most often met with surprise and disinterest: some contributors relate their astonishment when Arab partners actually desire to be penetrated or distaste when they want to have a more intimate relationship, and one recounts becoming disinterested in his Arab sexual partner, a student, after he becomes "Europeanized" and begins to wonder if he is homosexual.'

⁵⁵ Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), p. 157.

⁵⁶ Parti Indigène de la République, 'L'appel des Indigènes' (2005) <<http://indigenes-republique.fr/le-p-i-r/appel-des-indigenes-de-la-republique>> [last accessed 29 July 2019]. For a discussion of the term 'indigène' in a historical context, see Gemie, *French Muslims*, pp. 137–139.

⁵⁷ For a discussion and political genealogy of contemporary LGBT activism in Morocco, see Dransfeldt Christensen, pp. 108–113.

⁵⁸ Queer /LGBT+ of colour collectives and organizations in France that are currently active or were in recent years include QITOKO ('collectif par & pour des personnes queer, trans et intersexes racisé.e.s, basé à Saint Denis, depuis 2016'); LGBT pour la Palestine/ Queers pour la Palestine (founded in 2014); Helem Paris ('un groupe de personnes bisexuelles, lesbiennes, gays, trans, libanaisES et arabES sur Paris'); and SHAMS-France ('l'association LGBTQI des personnes maghrébines et moyen-orientales vivant en France'). All information is from the respective collective's/organisation's Facebook pages. The theme of Existrans 2019 (French equivalent of Trans Pride) is 'Inters, Migrant.e.s, Trans : mutilé.e.s, expulsé.e.s, assassiné.e.s !'

Club, the French-Moroccan artist and poet works to dissolve the distinction between 'high art' and 'popular culture,' referring to Genet as the source of his capacity to 'assumer ce mélange entre le sublime et l'argotique'.⁵⁹ Lakhri's citation of Genet as an aesthetic model opens onto political questions beyond the artist's awareness of Genet's instrumentalisation of the male Arab body. *Chameleon Club*'s emphasis on mutability and adaptation, on code-switching and liminality, brings us back to the opening words of Edmund White's biography: 'Jean Genet had remarkable powers of self-transformation'.⁶⁰ For Lakhri, like many young queer artists, the complex example of Genet seems unavoidable despite the unsavory aspects of the writer's own history, perhaps *because* it crystallizes contemporary difficulties in solidarity while at the same time proposing a certain rigour of transformation. To return to Said's observation that Genet 'entered the Arab space and lived in it [...] even though he was, and remained, different', I would argue that Genet's practice of transformation involved the subtle dialectic of embracing change at the level of the individual and the collective without relinquishing the past. A politically rigorous notion of transformation implies allowing oneself to be changed radically through solidarity without losing perspective on the forces by which one was produced and through which one operates socially. Genet's example, it seems, precisely by revealing what is unpurifiable in politics, what is intractable in desire and what is possible through transformation, brings into relief contradictions that must be met creatively in order to provoke a future of political power for both queer and racialized communities.

Taking Genet's rigour of transformation as our political inheritance, what his projects of the 1970s and 80s appear to adumbrate is a struggle against extractive logics and forms of violence that are simultaneously racial, hetero-patriarchal, and class-hierarchical, culminating in a queer, working-class, anti-colonial politics. I do not presume to offer a magical blueprint for how this queer, proletarian anti-colonialism will come about, however, I do, nevertheless, believe in it as the outcome, to use Said's words, 'of a very finely imagined and understood history' in which the political coordinates of queers, workers and immigrants have and will continue to converge.⁶¹ In Moroccan artist Bouchra Khalili's 2018 video *Twenty-Two Hours*, BPP Boston-chapter leader Doug Miranda, who situates Genet as a 'comrade-brother', powerfully but elliptically reminds the audience that '[y]ou fight racism with unity'.⁶² From our vantage in 2019, this phrase may sound vacuous were it not famously spoken by Fred Hampton, the young Panther leader assassinated by Chicago Police in 1969.⁶³ This unity, which is not an institutional politics of elucidating intersections, but the coalitional aggregation of communitarian power subtended by the tenets of proletarian internationalism, seems capable of answering what Miranda calls 'the demands of history.' If we agree with Fanon that '[c]haque génération doit dans une relative opacité découvrir sa mission', then the terms of this unity are as indeterminate as the historical trajectory on which its structures of feeling will be mapped.⁶⁴

Returning to the convergence of *Querelle* and *Chatila*, Fassbinder, in homage to Genet, rendered a mythic world of proletarian criminality against the backdrop of relations of control. This is a world beyond the binary of entanglement and freedom, where the inevitability of class-based conscriptions into military labour, drug-dealing, and sex work coincide with grandiose acts of violence, making *Querelle* a private fantasy layered onto a collective reality of constraint. If our social interpellations, our material subjections, and our individual auto-mythologies are the conditions of possibility for our own solidarities, we are reminded by Khalili's work that Genet

⁵⁹ Christelle Oyiri, 'Entre Poésie et Science Fiction, Tarek Lakhri Va Faire Beaucoup de Bien au Monde de L'art', *Vice Magazine* (2019) <<https://i-d.vice.com/fr/article/yw8bvj/entre-poesie-et-science-fiction-tarek-lakhri-va-faire-beaucoup-de-bien-au-monde-de-l-art>> [last accessed 17 September 2019].

⁶⁰ White, p. xv.

⁶¹ Said, p. 39.

⁶² Bouchra Khalili, *Twenty-Two Hours*.

⁶³ Fred Hampton, 'Power Anywhere Where There's People (Olivet Church, 1969)' <<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/717.html>> [last accessed 29 July 2019].

⁶⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Oeuvres* (Paris: La Découverte, 2011), p. 589.

understood how to ‘use myths *politically*’.⁶⁵ Situated as we are in our own lived time, the lessons we inherit from someone else’s actual life cannot be employed as strict models for our own acts, even if they guide our intentions. Because a political inheritance is a relation between a life and a legacy, the imperfect theatre of Genet’s legend does not propose we do this or that in particular. It instead imagines a form for action that must filled with particularity. As Genet writes in *Journal du voleur*, ‘[m]on courage consista à détruire toutes les habituelles raisons de vivre et à m’en découvrir d’autres. La découverte se fit lentement’.⁶⁶ If one were to embark on this project, truly, of destroying, through a commitment to transformation, all the habitual reasons for living in order to discover others, I can only imagine that a number of our burning questions would become much clearer. As queer revolutionaries have always understood, desire remains one possible language through which we can articulate something ungovernable in ourselves. But what is ungovernable in us and also in others remains the articulation of a transformative desire the proper name of which is politics.

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⁶⁵ Bouchra Khalili, *Twenty-Two Hours*.

⁶⁶ Genet, *Journal du voleur* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), p. 197.

BOOK REVIEWS

Translating Frantz Fanon Across Continents and Languages. Edited by KATHRYN BATCHELOR and SUE-ANN HARDING. Abingdon: Routledge, 2017. 257pp. Hb £100, Ebk £39.99. ISBN Hb 9781138658738. Eb 978131562062-6

Translating Frantz Fanon is a fascinating and significant collection, well worth time and attention. Its historical, contextualizing methodology makes it relevant not just for students and scholars of translation, as it is positioned by the publisher, but for those interested in the mechanics of knowledge transfer; in the role of information and culture in colonized environments and within social movements; and in left-wing politics, revolution and decolonization around the world. However, it also suffers to a more-than-usual extent from the patchiness which often affects edited volumes. This, as the editors admit, gives a strong feeling of the volume being an opening gambit, a suggestion of ways in which future research might be taken, rather than a finished project.

As Kathryn Batchelor's introduction rightly notes, the edited volume format allows the book's linguistic scope to extend beyond the skills of any one author (p. 3). With chapters reaching from Kenya to Sweden, Russia to Ireland, the studies strongly convey the connections and dissimilarities between the circumstances in which Fanon's works have been translated, the motives behind the many translations, and the impacts they have had. Adopting methodologies influenced by microhistory and *histoire croisée*, and combining these with textual analyses and source criticism, each translation is treated as an object of analysis in its own right, generating strands of enquiry and overlap in the social world — publishers, editors, translators, readers — as well as theories and debates in intellectual and ideological spheres. Thus, in many of the chapters (such as those on the early Italian, Swedish and English editions) we encounter the role of contingency, 'serendipity and individuality' (p. 224), friendships, political alliances and conversations in inspiring translators, editors and publishing houses to embark on versions of Fanon's various works. The attention to historical detail also helps to dispel some of the myths which have grown up around Fanon, born of assumptions about the routes which ideas have taken from one revolutionary context to another: most prominently, several chapters contain acerbic references to Homi Bhabha's 'sketchy and sensationalist' (p. 10) assertions about Fanon and Irish nationalist violence. Such debunking is not just a matter of historical accuracy; it also re-confers agency on activists, who are permitted to have ideas and reach conclusions on the basis of their own experiences, rather than being assumed always to have drawn them from reading movement intellectuals.

There are numerous common threads running through the contributions to this book. They include the different intentions behind translations, with earlier examples from the 1960s and 70s often inspired by revolutionary ideologies and a sense of the direct lessons for local struggles to be drawn from Fanon's work, versus in later years more intellectual interests from the perspectives of postcolonial studies or histories of Marxist ideas. So, for instance, the Iranian thinker Ali Shariati produced several translations of Fanon during the years of resistance against the Shah, and Italian activists in the 1960s saw themselves as part of global movements which put them in the same bracket as those fighting for liberation in Algeria. In Soviet Bloc countries in the 1970s and 80s, meanwhile, Fanon was more of a footnote to histories of anti-colonial struggle or Marxist thought, not a thinker and fighter with whom those in East Germany or the USSR were expected to identify.

The histories of the various translations also — perhaps less intentionally on the part of the editors and contributors to the volume — highlight the issue of translation as labour, who carries it out, and how it is valued. The stories of Fanon in English, Swedish, and Italian all highlight the role of young, activist translators, often women and often volunteers or poorly-remunerated, producing early editions for political presses. As authors and subjects become more famous and popular, and sales larger, however, established male translators took over.

A third, though by no means final, theme worth highlighting is the attention the various chapters pay to the way in which political environments and intended readerships influenced translational choices. Marxist translators working for leftist publishers, for instance, used very different vocabularies from Shariati, who adopted an Islamically-inflected language of jihad and martyrdom to fit his Iranian context, revolutionary ideas and Muslim readers. Constance Farrington, the Irish translator of the first English edition of *The Wretched of the Earth*, opted to simplify and ‘de-philosophise’ (p. 48) Fanon, seeking to appeal to less educated audiences; an unnamed Tanzanian translator followed similar strategies, removing detailed footnotes or references to Engels which they apparently believed would make little sense to their readers.

The composition of various anthologies of his work further contributed to this process of creating many different Fanons — postcolonial, medical, Third Worldist, Marxist — according to the ideologies and sensibilities of translators, editors, publishers and intended readerships. So did paratextual materials, such as blurbs and, perhaps most revealingly, cover artwork, examined in several chapters of *Translating Fanon*. The striking images of skulls, automatic weapons, and bloodied spider-webs adorning the covers of 1970s and 80s Iranian and Arabic editions, published at the high points of the Iran-Iraq War or of armed Palestinian resistance to the State of Israel, contrast sharply with images or text appealing to the idea of Fanon as a global thinker and philosopher, historically important but not stirring contemporary political passions.

The primary message of this collection is one of the diversity to be found amongst Fanon translations: of context, inspiration, language and message. When Fanon is invoked by a revolutionary fighter or a postcolonial theorist, are they talking about, and are their listeners receiving, the same ideas? As this book highlights, the practice and politics of translation are intensely circumscribed by time and place, and in the case of a writer such as Frantz Fanon this can have profound political implications. Rich in detail, analysis and anecdote, this anthology is an excellent — if variable — study of the mechanics and resonances of such variety.

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Mémoires d'une Afrique française Volumes I & II. By ROBERT DELAVIGNETTE. Edited by Anthony Mangeon, in collaboration with Roger Little. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2017, 174pp. & 212pp. Pb £15.91 & £15.91. ISBN: 9782343116624 & ISBN: 9782343116631.

Mémoires d'une Afrique française by Robert Delavignette had a long shelf life before they were dusted and curated by Anthony Mangeon in collaboration with Roger Little. A typed-up version had been available for forty years at the Hoover Institute of the University of Stanford to which they were donated in the 1970s by William Cohen, an American historian specializing in Franco-African relations, and who had received a copy from Delavignette himself. Published in 2017 by L'Harmattan, Delavignette's unfinished memoirs can now take part in the circulation of memories around the political, institutional, and literary history of French colonization in Africa by providing insight into the increasingly disillusioned mind of one of the most prominent colonial administrators of French Africa, although often unknown or forgotten. Throughout, Mangeon always seems to anticipate a mixed, if not timid, reception of Delavignette's texts, as they are a point of entry into a power-charged and colonialist perspective. While Mangeon notes that the publication of Delavignette's memoirs will most certainly delight scholars, or simply colonial history enthusiasts, he also reminds us that such a relic of colonial thought might be met with a harsh welcome by those who consider that France still has to acknowledge its colonial past. And yet, Delavignette's personal recollections span a large period of time, from the 1910s until the end of his political mandate acting as High Commissioner in Cameroon between the years 1945 and 1947, and therefore include moments of self-reflection and doubt looking back on the failures of French colonial rule. Moreover, as Mangeon points out, Delavignette did not start writing his

memoirs until 1965, which reveals not only an ability to summon landscapes of memory foregone yet somewhat tangible (although Delavignette is keen to remind us that memories can be deceptive), but most importantly, the development of his critical thinking over time.

Delavignette's memoirs follow a chronological order and are structured around three distinct sections: the Preamble; 'La classe et la cour', which goes back on his childhood memories, especially his schooling at the Collège de Châtillon-sur-Seine and at the Lycée de Dijon, as well as the various teachers that have greatly influenced the cultivation of his humanistic values and his continuing search for unity and coexistence; and 'L'offrande et l'étranger,' which is the largest section, is divided into three parts. The first section, 'Du bureau de Dakar aux tâches de la brousse,' starts with Delavignette's departure for Dakar on March 28, 1920. The second section, 'L'école de la France d'Outre-Mer: "Colo"', examines how World War II, and especially the Nazi occupation of France, affected French Africa, and recounts the resistance effort outside of France. Finally, 'Les aurores camerounaises de l'indépendance africaine' reflects on the significant moments towards independence in French Africa.

Reading Delavignette's memoirs today is running the risk, in particular as contemporary readers and scholars in postcolonial theory, of articulating antagonistic views in response to a text that lingers on the notion of 'colonial humanism', and the idea that French imperialism could successfully shape horizontal solidarity as well as interracial, intercultural, and interreligious cooperation across the French colonial empire. Rather, Delavignette's text equips us with an analytical framework for identifying and taking stock of the premises of the French colonial project, its implementation in colonized territories, and its final demise. Furthermore, *Mémoires d'une Afrique française* poses an epistemological quandary as to how to productively read and analyse documents produced by individuals directly involved in the French colonial administration. While being a pedagogical resource to gain insight into the history of French Africa, Delavignette's memoirs also inherently constitute a pedagogical exercise by way of interrogating our respective critical postures: that is, how to think through contradictory stances and achieve synthesis. Considering the relatively long time period covered in the text and the time that elapsed between the year 1947 when Delavignette left Cameroon and the year 1965 when he started to write his memoirs, *Mémoires* is peppered with rhetorical evidence of self-reflection and doubt calling into question the different elements that composed the colonial administration (i.e. the school system) and the fallacies of 'colonial humanism'. Doubt therefore becomes instrumental in questioning former propositions and belief systems, as well as assessing the course of one's critical thinking. In the same way that Delavignette demonstrates, consciously or not, an ability to be critical of previously formed values and assumptions, contemporary readers of *Mémoires* might adopt a necessary critical distance approaching a small part of a larger and complex history.

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Entangled Otherness: Cross-gender Fabrications in the Francophone Caribbean. By CHARLOTTE HAMMOND. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018. Xii + 258 pp. Hb £80.00. Eb £70.00. ISBN: 9781786941480

In *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Frantz Fanon famously denied the existence of Caribbean homosexuality only to describe his 'homosexuals-that-do-not-exist' by characterizing the way they dress: 'Rappelons toutefois l'existence de ce qu'on appelle là-bas "des hommes habillés en dames" ou "Ma Commère". Ils ont la plupart du temps une veste et une jupe'.¹ Furthermore, his highlighting of cross-dressing occurs in the same text in which Fanon twice describes black skin — never a biological covering but always constructed through cultural 'epidermization' — as a

¹ Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Seuil, coll. Points, 1952), p. 146.

kind of livery. Given that this text was published in 1952, one might wonder why it has taken so long for the relation between gender, sexuality, and dress to receive such a thorough treatment in Caribbean Studies as it does in Charlotte Hammond's *Entangled Otherness: Cross-gender Fabrications in the Francophone Caribbean*. Compared with other regions of Francophone Studies, the Caribbean has been the subject of relatively little queer research. Nonetheless, queer work on the French-speaking Caribbean has gradually begun to appear. I myself have published on the Creole figure of the *makoumè* or 'sissy faggot' (*Queer Roots for the Diaspora: Ghosts in the Family Tree* [2016]), Bénédicte Boisseron has carried out similar work on Maryse Condé's work (*Creole Renegades: Rhetoric of Betrayal and Guilt in the Caribbean Diaspora* [2014]), and Michel Magniez has published a chapter focusing on Haiti in Nadève Ménard's edited collection *Écrits d'Haïti: Perspectives sur la littérature haïtienne contemporaine (1986–2006)*. Hammond's book now greatly expands this emerging sub-field. Since her study considers the 'tightly knotted colonial concepts — of race, gender, sexuality or other social distinctions — and the way in which the minority subjects... shuttle between these inherited identity markers in order to reclaim and recircuit a specifically French colonial fabrication of the Other' (p. 3), it has been well worth the wait. Indeed, Hammond argues that 'In a francophone Caribbean haunted by the legacies of slave ownership, crossing one set of binaries, such as gender, is also often contingent on crossing other divisions' (ibid.).

Hammond performs a remarkable feat of cultural studies, one that assembles a corpus of primary texts that will be of interest in and of themselves: the 2001 documentary by Haitian diaspora directors Anne Lescot and Laurence Magloire, *Des hommes et des dieux*, which highlights 'the place of same-sex desire and cross-gender expression within Haiti [by] focusing on the Afro-diasporic religion of Haitian Vodou' (p. 82); Leah Gordon's 2008 film *Bounda pa bounda: A Drag Zaka*, which 'depicts Dieuli Laurent "dressing up" as the carnival character of Bounda for a performance with his Rara band' (p. 124); and Martinican Jean-Pierre Sturm's 2004 play *Ma commère Alfred*, whose eponymous character becomes godmother to his best friend's child (businessman by day, Alfred is also a crossdresser, and drag performer, and *makoumè* by night); and Claire Denis's 1994 film *J'ai pas sommeil*, based on a real-life Martinican drag-queen serial killer. But before chapters two through five, which articulate the readings of these texts, Hammond offers an initial chapter titled 'Costuming Colonial Resistance in the New World,' in which she 'consider[s] the gendered and clothed body in the francophone Caribbean as it emerges in the colonial textuality of the archives during the period of emancipation (1791–1804)' (p. 48). The analysis of material culture in this chapter is reminiscent of another excellent work on the material culture of colonialism, Madeleine Dobie's *Trading Places: Colonization and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century French Culture* (2010). Hammond's study thus further inflects work like Dobie's as well as monumental studies combining the political economics of colonialism with the changes it brought about in metropolitan cultural capital like Sidney W. Mintz's *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985) with gender, gender identity, and sexuality. Furthermore, her five chapters are framed by an excellent introduction and conclusion, the first of which offers a thorough critical presentation and sophisticated theorization of the book's key concepts as well as establishes a rich context for the readings that follow.

A key indicator of the value of these readings is the semantic wealth with which they elaborate a series of textile metaphors in emphasizing the dress in cross-dressing. From the book's very title to expressions that I have already cited, like, for instance, the 'colonial fabrication of the Other' (p. 3), Hammond weaves (if I might permit myself such a metaphor) an elaborate web of connections that create a network, indeed a mapping, of the various intersectionalities under consideration. Rather than overworking a wordplay that might seem to lack a correspondingly rich conceptual content, this semantic wealth instead matches the intricacy of the book's readings and theorizations.

It is not, however, that the book is without certain flaws, regardless of how minimal they might be. I sometimes had to search around for clear explanations of certain Creole expressions, explanations found *after* the words in question are first used. For example, whereas an explanation of 'fanmi se dra' in the book's second chapter titles is given relatively conveniently on the chapter's

third page, an English version of the title of Gordon's film *Bounda pa bounda* is only given on page 124, the fourth mention of this title according to the book's index, and even there a full explanation of the expression remains lacking. Hammond also defines the French word *commère*, from which the Creole *makoumè* derives, as 'godmother,' whereas *marraine* is 'godmother' and *ma commère* was the term that the godfather used to address the godmother of the same child. Nonetheless, this work is well worth the read. Indeed, it emphasizes the Caribbean as a (Francophone) region rich in material for Queer Studies.

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Awu's Story: A Novel. By JUSTINE MINTSA. Trans. by CHERYL TOMAN. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2018. 123 pp. Pb \$17.95. ISBN: 9781496206930.

First published in 2000 as *Histoire d'Awu*, Cheryl Toman's 2018 translation is the first translation into English, or indeed, into any other language, of a novel written by the influential Gabonese writer Justine Mintsa. Mintsa's small but critically-recognized corpus, comprising *Un seul tournant Makôsu* (1994), *Premières lectures* (1997), *Histoire d'Awu* (2000), and *Larmes de cendre* (2010), has not garnered much attention in the Anglophone world. Although the author has been awarded prestigious honours by institutions from across the Francosphere, such as the Chevalier des Palmes académiques in 2001, little is known about her life and work beyond the Francophone world. Toman aims to address this cultural gap through her translation, raising awareness of the creativity of Mintsa's writing while simultaneously elevating the status of Gabonese literature as a whole, which has not tended to circulate beyond the African continent.

It is important to recognize that Toman, Professor of French at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, has considerable research expertise in Gabonese literature. Her latest publication, *Women Writers of Gabon: Literature and Herstory* (2016), offers a detailed analysis of significant female Gabonese writers, including Mintsa. Toman is also an experienced literary translator: she has translated other key works of fiction by African women writers, including Cameroonian Thérèse Kuoh-Moukoury's *Rencontres essentielles* (1969), translated as *Essential Encounters* (2000). The fact that Mintsa's novel has been translated by a well-respected translator and academic who has great knowledge of, and passion for, Gabonese women's writing, grants the text greater cultural capital. This prestige is reinforced by the foreword written by Kuoh-Moukoury, frequently described as the first woman novelist of Francophone Africa. Kuoh-Moukoury notes that the character of Awu is an important reference point for all African women today because she is modern and progressive yet committed to cultural tradition. Awu thus represents, according to Kuoh-Moukoury, 'the contemporary African woman whose aim is to actively participate in the evolution and modernization of her country' (p. vii).

After a brief translator's note, in which Toman thanks Mintsa for her support — such dialogue between author and translator is a further indicator of the translation's prestige —, Toman offers a useful overview of Mintsa's life and oeuvre. She situates the novel among Mintsa's other works, noting that *Histoire d'Awu* was the first text by an African woman writer to be published by Gallimard, inaugurating their 'Continents noirs' series. She then includes a brief biography of Mintsa before focusing on the key themes of *Histoire d'Awu*. One of the strengths of this section is Toman's analysis of how Fang culture is woven into the novel through overt references to Fang language and a nod to the orality of Fang culture. She defines these literary techniques as 'Mintsa's way of "decolonizing" the novel written in French' (p. 7). However, it could be helpful to provide more contextual information about the Fang people, particularly as Toman's primary audience seems to be readers with little prior knowledge about Gabon and its culture. Who are these Fang communities and what is their status in Gabon? Toman concludes her introductory essay on a

laudatory tone by placing Mintsá among other important female writers from Gabon, such as Chantal Magalie Mbazoo Kassa and Sylvie Ntsame, and praising Mintsá for creating such an emotive and instructive text.

The novel itself is divided into three parts. It is a third-person narrative, with the narrator frequently switching focus between the two protagonists Awudabiran and her husband Obame Afane. The linear plot tells the story of Obame's second wife whom he married because his first wife was unable to have children. The novel charts the development of their relationship, the birth of their children, and the problems faced by their extended family. For instance, Obame's teenage niece Ada falls pregnant aged just twelve and is abandoned by her mother Akut. Gender issues are apparent in the novel: when Obame retires from his job as a schoolteacher, he is reluctantly forced to rely financially on his wife in order to maintain his reputation in the village. At the end of the novel, Obame is killed in a road accident, and Awu has to endure all manner of humiliating rituals to demonstrate her love for her husband. Awu's strength of character is revealed when she stands up to her brother-in-law and refuses to be treated as his property.

Toman's translation of *Histoire d'Anu* is accurate, fluent, and engaging. Mintsá's detailed descriptions are rendered very effectively, using phrases peppered with rich adjectives and adverbs to maintain the visual element of the novel. Toman is equally keen to retain the culturally-specific items in order to inform a readership who is unfamiliar with life in Gabon, and particularly with the traditions of the Fang community. Terms in the Fang language, such as 'akiééé' (p. 77), are italicized and glossed in the notes section at the back of the book. Some lexical items in French are also retained to demonstrate the continuous influence of the French in Gabon, even after independence in 1960. A notable example is the education system in Gabon, which is modelled on French education; terms such as 'cinquième' and 'collège' (p. 47) appear in the translation and are glossed. The translation is occasionally let down, however, by the dialogue which appears a little stilted. While some contractions and idiomatic phrases are used, they are not consistent throughout the novel, and formal word order with prepositions, such as in Obame's question to his nephews, 'to whom does it belong?' (p. 56) seems unnatural in speech, particularly among family members.

Overall, though, this is a translation which is faithful to Mintsá's novel in French and reads well in English. I highly recommend this novel for students, scholars, and anyone interested in African women's writing, and I hope that Toman's critical and creative endeavours pave the way for a greater awareness of Mintsá's work, and for a more detailed understanding of the richness of literary production in Gabon, across the Anglophone world.

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Translating the Postcolonial in Multilingual Contexts. Ed. by JUDITH MISRAHI-BARAK & SRILATA RAVI. Montpellier: Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2017. 282 pp. Pb 24€. ISBN: 9782367812410.

Beyond the bibliography of this book, itself a treasure trove for engaging with postcolonial translation theory, the main text presents a rich contribution to Translation Studies and Postcolonial Studies. This edited volume of essays refocuses Translation Studies, and postcolonial theory, onto translation which negotiates and disrupts borders. Judith Misrahi-Barak and Srilata Ravi write in their introductory essay, 'as an act which is both transaction and rupture, translation in postcolonial contexts [...] produce[s] creative semantic tensions [...] on the borders' (p. 16), with the emphasis placed here and throughout the volume on that space in-between. Indeed, although the book's title sorely understates its *raison d'être*, borders, interstitiality and the space between/*entre* are repeated notions that tie the thirteen essays together into more of a conversation than a collection. This binding is imperative, and highly effective, for just as the authors included

are from a range of countries, contexts and experiences, the volume is vastly diverse in terms of subject matter. The geographical groundings are grouped into the Americas, the Mediterranean, Africa and Islands, an inconsistent method of categorisation that intrigues me more than it concerns me. Forms discussed include novels, testimonies, film and performance. There is diversity of language as three chapters are in French, and many more languages are referenced. This multiplicity, which is consistent with the focus of the content of the volume, could risk gaps in application, but instead causes the unifying themes to sing louder, and it is this complex weave of content and context that is the book's real strength.

The volume engages with canonical texts such as Camus' *L'Étranger* and draws on canonized translation theory such as Lawrence Venuti, Homi Bhaba, and Paul Bandia as well as lesser known contexts in both regards, for example foregrounding Rwandan women's testimonial literature (see Catherine Gilbert's chapter) and Rebecca Walkowitz (see Jan Steyn's discussion of Maryse Condé's translations). It provides a meeting place for a great deal of translation theory; questions are asked regarding self-translation, collaboration, reception and readership, responsibility, power, trauma, paratexts, even the figure of the 'husband-translator' (p. 99). And as the translation theory binds together these hugely heterogeneous contexts, the book emerges as a valuable reader for students and senior scholars alike.

Each essay stands alone as useful perspectives for those who are studying Albert Camus, Ousmane Sembène or Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, for example, and there are some particular gems in these pages, for instance, Lynn Blin's sensitive discussion of multiple Englishes (pp. 203–220) and Catherine Gilbert's grappling with paratexts and collaboration (pp. 141–160). However, there is great benefit to reading them together and overall the essays work well to complement each other. The editing and arranging is to Judith Misrahi-Barak and Srilata Ravi's credit. The coupling of Catherine Gilbert's and Charlotte Baker's contrasting chapters for instance serves to strengthen the argument of each.

It is not a volume to be swallowed whole. It lends itself to questioning, to probing. It invites dialogue not only between Postcolonial Studies and Translation Studies, but also within these disciplines, even between essays (for example, paratexts are discussed in multiple frameworks), for the very contexts being studied and dissected are contexts of dialogue, of that translational weave occurring in, through and between heterogeneous languages and cultures.

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The Cult of the Modern: Trans-Mediterranean France and the Construction of French Modernity. By GAVIN MURRAY-MILLER. Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2017. 336 pp. Hb \$60.00. ISBN: 9780803290648.

In this monograph, Gavin Murray-Miller seeks to nuance our understanding of the specificities of French modernity by closely examining the political, social, and cultural context in which it evolved in the mid- to late nineteenth century. By focusing on the Second Empire, Murray-Miller's work fills the gap between the extensive historiographies that, on the one hand, explore the French Revolution as the foundational moment of Western modernity and, on the other, position the Third Republic as the highpoint of the modernisation of France. His book makes a persuasive case for seeing the period of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte's rule not as a 'liminal' moment between modernizing regimes (p. 6) but rather as 'pivotal' in the foundation of a modern France (p. 7). In doing so, he not only counters the lazy assumption that modern in France always meant 'republican' but he also highlights the extent to which cultures of modernity were forged and contested at the same time and often in the same ways as colonial cultures in what was France's most important overseas possession at the time, Algeria.

From the outset, Murray-Miller convincingly challenges the conventional wisdom around the modernization of France, nuancing the claim that the bourgeoisie were both the midwives and the bedrock of French modernity. Through a close study of the rhetoric of contemporary political actors, he shows that the categories of 'modern' and 'pre-modern' did not always map neatly onto the existing class distinctions in the French imperial polity. Instead, a new hierarchy emerged in which subaltern groups such as the French peasantry and the indigenous Algerian population were cast as primitive and barbarous subjects whose salvation could only come through the modernizing zeal of French elites. Here, as throughout the book, Murray-Miller draws a parallel between the modernization policies targeting supposedly backward citizens in the metropole and those imposed on colonial subjects in Algeria. While the concept of a 'trans-Mediterranean civilizing mission' (p. 66) effectively highlights the commonality in administrative practices in metropole and colony, it does somewhat obscure the important differences in the levels of coercion and possibilities for resistance that accompanied the implementation of the modernizing agenda in France and in Algeria.

The author's argument goes beyond the now well-established idea that colonial territories, especially settler colonies like Algeria, were the testing grounds for the policies of modernization to be applied in the metropole. He contends that the colony was in fact at the centre of debates over what shape a modern imperial polity should take. Here his claim is at its most convincing when it focuses on the slippery concept of nationality, a mainstay of Bonapartist political discourse. He effectively shows how supporters of Napoleon III mobilized this 'elastic and labile' (p. 114) concept in both metropole and colony as a means of somehow reconciling the 'universal and the particular' (p. 92) and thus, buying time and space for the modernizing 'conciliatory revolution' (p. 115) that was at the heart of the Bonapartist political programme.

While the Bonapartists may have held a monopoly on political power, they never successfully monopolized the political space. The author offers a detailed and engaging account of the efforts of republican opponents of the Second Empire to articulate a counter-narrative of modernity. He contends that the republicans, whose claim to the heritage of the Revolutionary era was openly contested by the Bonapartists, turned to Algeria to legitimize their vision of a future trans-Mediterranean polity. The defenders of republicanism found fertile ground among the settler population, some of whom had been exiled to Algeria for their activism against the imperial regime and almost all of whom were virulently opposed to Napoleon III's 'Arab Kingdom' policy in the colony. The book persuasively argues that republicans mobilized the exclusion of the settler population from political power in the colony to present Algeria as the epitome of 'Bonapartist tyranny' and thus, to 'indicate the necessity of overall liberal reform in France' (p. 237). This had the effect of tying the settler's struggle against the philo-Orientalist despotism of the Emperor in the colony to the broader campaign for democratic freedoms in the metropole, with republicans suggesting that they 'were two sides of a national resistance movement against arbitrary rule and power' (p. 238). As Murray-Miller points out, the political order established under the Third Republic would also tie the two together, binding the settler to the metropole in one unified polity whose twin driving forces were modernization and colonization.

The book closes with a powerful argument that the 'brand of republicanism born from the Second Empire' was articulated around 'a shared national mission to modernize the primitive' and thus 'necessitated a colonial French Republic' (p. 253). Murray-Miller throws down the gauntlet to those who critique the Third Republic's failure to live up to the promise of the 'civilizing mission' by arguing that the republican modernization project was premised on the imperfectability of its colonial subjects. While his claim here is supported with ample evidence throughout the text, it would be further strengthened by a deeper engagement with the work of scholars in the field of colonial history and/or postcolonial studies who share his analysis, albeit from a different perspective. For example, the work of Fred Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler in their seminal text *Tensions of Empire* is referenced in the book but could have been more explicitly evoked to highlight how Murray-Miller's arguments resonate with wider understandings of the modernizing colonial polity in the field.

This absence speaks to a broader tendency in the book to avoid detailed analysis of what colonialism meant in Algeria and how the territory's coloniality impacted all of its inhabitants. The voices of the colonized themselves are largely absent and we are never given insight into their alternative visions of modernity. The proto-state developed by the Emir Abd-al-Qādir during the resistance to the conquest was itself an experiment in the blending of modernity and tradition and merits at least a mention in this text. Likewise, a mention of the broad range of modernization theories developed by postcolonial theorists, including those associated with Algeria, such as Frantz Fanon and Malek Bennabi, would go some way to countering the eurocentricity of the text's analytical framework. While Murray-Miller's insertion of Algeria into the debate about French modernity is most welcome, he occasionally treats the colony's history solely as a prism through which to understand France and not as a subject worthy of interest in and of itself.

This criticism notwithstanding, *The Cult of the Modern* is an important contribution to scholarship that shows how a rethinking of the geographical and temporal boundaries of the modernization process can transform our understanding of modernity itself. By re-centring the narrative of French modernization on the period of the Second Empire and on the space of colonial Algeria, Murray-Miller shows how a certain vision of an 'ethnopolitical colonial order' (p. 239) became and, one could argue, remains synonymous with modernity in France.

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Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies

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