15.1, Spring/Summer 2025
ISSN 2044-4109 (Online)

Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies

A Biannual Publication

Assembling an Archive of Resistance in *Péyi An Nou*: Accommodation, Hospitality and the BUMIDOM

Abstract: This article argues for a reading of Jessica Oublié and Marie-Ange Rousseau's graphic novel, *Péyi An Nou* (2017), as an 'archive of resistance', which refers to the rejection of French universalism to critique past and present neocolonial power structures. The graphic novel approaches the history of the BUMIDOM (*Bureau pour le développement des migrations dans les départements d'outre-mer*) which was a French state-sponsored, migration organisation established in 1963 during Charles de Gaulle's presidency until it ceased operations in 1982. The organisation facilitated the movement of about 160,000 people from the *Départements et régions d'outre-mer* (DROM) to mainland France.

Keywords: BUMIDOM, migration, mobility, accommodation, colonialism, archive, resistance

Published by Éditions Steinkis in 2017, writer Jessica Oublié and illustrator Marie-Ange Rousseau's *bande dessinée* (BD) or graphic novel, *Péyi An Nou*, details the complex, shared history of migration experienced by Oublié's family, upon learning that her grandfather migrated to Paris in 1974, and the stories of many others who arrived via the *Bureau pour le développement des migrations dans les départments d'outre-mer*, otherwise known as the BUMIDOM, or around the same time. The title, *Péyi An Nou*, is Guadeloupean Creole and translates to 'notre pays' in French and signals a point of entry into a discussion on how the graphic novel can be considered an archive as it assembles words and images to produce a text that contributes to national archives to unveil, in a new way, a critical point in history. *Péyi An Nou* has achieved success both within and beyond the Francophone world – notably having won the 'Prix BD du livre politique' in 2018 for its commitment to using artistic creation to engage in contemporary politics, predominantly regarding larger conversations on 'séparatisme,' 'communautarisme,' and race in France. In an attempt to bring the graphic novel to new audiences, Oublié and Rousseau have been invited by American universities, such as the University of Pittsburgh and Scripps College, to discuss the graphic novel. It is this engagement with politics and the classification of the graphic novel as a *bande dessinée documentaire*, which centres on the telling of historical events. To that end, I contend that *Péyi An Nou* constructs an 'archive of resistance', which is a concept that communicates the deconstruction of traditional archives against hegemonic narratives to form an alternative archive. The political nature of *Péyi An Nou* is evoked and marked by its interrogation of the BUMIDOM, a government agency that led to state-organized waves of migration from the Caribbean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, the South American nation of French Guiana, and from the island of Réunion, which is situated in the Indian Ocean, to hexagonal France. The BUMIDOM operated from 1963 to 1982, originating during the presidency of Charles de Gaulle.[1] Oublié and Rousseau's engagement with politics and history is rooted in Oublié's personal family experience, enabling the integration of sources that include testimonies from her relatives and their acquaintances, as well as from other individuals affected by the BUMIDOM. I note here that Oublié's grandfather, who arrived in mainland France in 1974, did not arrive via the BUMIDOM, at least not to Oublié's knowledge, but many of his acquaintances did, which prompts Oublié's curiosity in the

[1] Amongst various sources, dates vary for both the beginning and end of the BUMIDOM. One may see dates such as 1961, 1962 or 1963 for the beginning and 1981, 1982 and 1983 for the end. I use the dates of 1963 and 1982 for this article as they appear to be the most consistent and recognized amongst sources.

organisation. Oublié and Rousseau also make ample use of the archival documents available to them, as well as interviews with scholars such as Sylvain Pattieu, Françoise Vergès and Stéphanie Condon, which I will elaborate on later in this article.

Péyi An Nou is divided into fifteen chapters, each with a specific goal or point related to the BUMIDOM, while maintaining overall cohesion as they guide the reader through the creation of the graphic novel within the graphic novel – a migrating journey that allows the reader to experience Oublié and Rousseau building it as they move through the text.[2] The graphic novel opens with an introduction, which shows Oublié, in February of 2015, sitting at a hair salon in Paris when suddenly she receives a call from her mother alerting her that her grandfather has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. Visibly shaken by the news, she also makes it known that it has been 'trois ans [qu'elle] ne [l'a] pas vu…'[3] From there, the graphic novel shifts into a discourse surrounding the BUMIDOM, as the next sequence of panels focuses on Oublié and her grandfather, when he had just arrived in Paris from Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe.

I argue that *Péyi An Nou*, through its critical engagement with French national history and colonialism, works to construct an 'archive of resistance' to challenge contemporary assumptions of accommodation, hospitality, and identity in Francophone postcolonial contexts. The graphic novel explores these histories by immersing the reader in the lived realities of individuals now divided between mainland France and the *départements et régions d'outre-mer* (DROM); places to which many no longer feel a personal connection, except through the inherited stories and experiences of their parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents. Oublié's personal experience of learning of the BUMIDOM is the driving force behind the assembling of this graphic novel. Still, it is ultimately the reliance upon archives, both official and unofficial, that permit works like *Péyi An Nou* to exist.[4] This article explores the intersections of decolonial studies, postcolonial studies, and archival studies to unpack the complex, shared histories of France and its DROM. It is split into four main sections: the first, 'The BUMIDOM: The Question of Race in France,' discusses the racialisation of the BUMIDOM and the state of race relations in France, which have not evolved much, if at all. The second section 'Assembling an Archive of Resistance,' rethinks the archive and interrogates the use of official and un-official archival documents, which ultimately explores the role of alternative archives in the construction of the graphic novel. The third section, 'Narratives of Resistance,' argues that *Péyi An Nou* presents a narrative excluded from hegemonic national history, an omission that is often intended to cast nations in a positive light. The fourth and last section, 'Postcolonial Accommodations,' suggests a perspective of hybridity, the mixing of personal narratives and history throughout the text.

The BUMIDOM: The Question of Race in France

The French government formed the BUMIDOM in 1963, which ultimately became a government agency that, as mentioned above, promoted state-sanctioned mass emigration from the DROM to mainland France over almost two decades. Historian Sylvain Pattieu's essay featured in the essential edited volume *The Black Populations of France: Histories from Metropole to Colony* (2021), situates

[2] For instance, we see both Oublié and Rousseau for the first time, together, on page 16. They are seated in a café with notes and several of Rousseau's illustrations on the table. It is here that the reader is met with the construction of the graphic novel and set off on a journey to better understand the BUMIDOM through the eyes of Oublié and Rousseau. See Jessica Oublié and Marie-Ange Rousseau, *Péyi An Nou* (Paris: Éditions Steinkis, 2017), p. 16.

[3] Ibid., 3

[4] Unofficial archival materials here refer to information that does not come from government sources, libraries, institutes, or places where the materials would have otherwise been accounted for by outside sources.

the BUMIDOM within the historical context of its establishment:

> the context of the creation of the institution was that of the Trentes Glorieuses, the postwar years of prosperity when the metropole experienced full employment and high wages, but the DOM remained incomparably more impoverished. There was of course a certain convergence, albeit one that remains to be demonstrated, between the interests of the government in diffusing the social crisis and of employers recruiting labor in the context of the working-class insubordination after the events of May 1968, as well as the desire of the immigrants themselves to escape their extremely degraded social situation by profiting from the opportunities offered in the metropole.[5]

Pattieu is emphasizing France's invested stake in a programme such as the BUMIDOM, which hinged on establishing a cheap labour force that could be easily exploited, considering the lack of opportunities in the DROM at the time, which of course caught the attention of local populations. Nora Eguienta and Sylvain Pattieu's collaborative work on the history of women and the BUMIDOM sheds light on the political instability that clouded the DROM. Essentially, they make note of how just over ten years after the first DROM were established in 1946, local governments were disillusioned by the lack of progress and the apparent inequality between metropolitan France and its overseas territories.[6] Between 1963 and 1982, around 200,000 people from the DROM made their way to metropolitan France, however, I note that the first decade of the organisation was dominated by the presence of female migrants who made up about one third of the total emigrant population.[7]

There is very little information on the agency that has been publicly and widely circulated, with most of the work on the BUMIDOM residing in the realm of academic and scholarly publications. It has been argued by Antonia Wimbush, a Francophone studies scholar who has worked extensively on the BUMIDOM, that there is not much public information available nor public discussion of the institution in France because 'this would mean drawing attention to how the French state organized and controlled its citizens on grounds of race."[8] Wimbush's assertion that the BUMIDOM has fallen into relative obscurity due to its racial underpinnings evokes the question and state of race relations in France, which remains a taboo and highly controversial issue in the nation for a myriad of reasons. The most notable one is to avoid fragmenting society and the supposed need for a 'colourblind' society, which is often justified by the trivial declaration that 'speaking about race only leads to more racism.'

The state of race relations took a dramatic turn on a global scale when in 2020, just after the brutal murder of a Black-American man, George Floyd, several worldwide protests erupted against police brutality: in the United States, France, Senegal, Australia, the United Kingdom and

[5] Sylvain Pattieu, 'Organizing Overseas Migrations to the Metropole, Actions and Contradictions', in *The Black Populations of France: Histories from Metropole to Colony,* ed. by Sylvain Pattieu, Emmanuelle Sibeud and Tyler Stovall (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022), pp. 123–38 (p. 124).
[6] Nora Eguienta and Sylvain Pattieu, 'The Immigrants of BUMIDOM and Their Resistance to Employment Assignments', trans. S.C. Kaplan, *Journal of Women's History* 35, no. 2 (2023): pp. 103–24, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2
[7] Ibid., 104.
[8] Antonia Wimbush, 'The Windrush and the BUMIDOM: The Memorialization of Caribbean Migration,' *Memory Studies*, 2022, pp. 1–15 (p. 2).

several other nations.[9] In a profile with the *New York Times*, Maboula Soumahoro, a professor and Africana studies specialist, discusses race in France and what it means to be 'noir.'[10] For Soumahoro, '[q]uand je regarde les deux pays, je ne dis pas qu'un pays est meilleur que l'autre. Pour moi, ce sont deux sociétés racistes qui gèrent le racisme à leur façon.'[11] Just as the question of systemic racism is embedded in the history of the United States, the point of origin of the George Floyd protests, France has been forced to confront its painful history of racism, discrimination, imperialism and police brutality. Being the daughter of immigrants but herself born in France, Soumahoro explains her identity as a French woman saying: '[o]n est français à notre nouvelle manière et on n'est pas des Français blancs. On a autre chose à la maison mais on se retrouve quand même, et c'est là que ça devient noir.'[12] The evocation of being 'francais à notre nouvelle manière' speaks to the fragmentation of French identity and society – hybridizing the identities of the descendants of immigration and emigration.[13] The BUMIDOM and its lasting legacies as affirmed in *Péyi An Nou* provides salient examples as to how French identity has been fragmented and complexified, thus further giving representation to its subjects who have long been on the margins of society as *citoyens de seconde zone*. Oublié, who moves between Guadeloupe and mainland France, finds herself divided between two worlds, even though, under French law, they are considered one, as Guadeloupe is an overseas department and therefore legally part of French territory.

However, the debate on the fragmentation of French society is not new. The concept of 'la fracture sociale' first appeared in 1981 in an article by Pierre Veilletet, but the concept gained popularity in 1990 when it appeared in an article for *Le Monde* entitled 'Politique la démocratie en danger,' which states: '[e]t notre société se brise d'une redoutable fracture sociale : les banlieues, la misère, le chômage, la violence, façonnent une classe nouvelle, d'autant plus désespérée qu'elle ne se sent pas représentée et qu'elle n'attend plus le grand soir.'[14] The idea of a 'fracture sociale' speaks to the abject conditions in many French *banlieues*, multicultural suburban areas often marked by socio-economic marginalisation, where many individuals brought from the DROM to the metropole have historically lived and frequently continue to live.

Building on this discussion of fragmentation and identity, I examine how *Péyi An Nou* serves as a tool to rethink perceptions of French identity by challenging a national archive rooted in universalism, republicanism, and implicit colour-blindness.[15] As mentioned earlier, the graphic novel approaches Oublié's personal family history relevant to her grandfather who emigrated and lived in France for a significant period of time. However, *Péyi An Nou* moves beyond discussions of the BUMIDOM to connect the actions of this government agency to that of the French colonial

[9] Protests in France were also in response to the 2016 death of Adama Traoré who died while in police custody in Beaumont-sur-Oise – a situation like that of George Floyd, which brought forth much comparison. See: Lauren Collins, 'Assa Traoré and the Fight for Black Lives in France,' *The New Yorker*, 2020, < https://www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-europe/assa-traore-and-the-fight-for-black-lives-in-france> [accessed 7 July 2023]

[10] Norimitsu Onishi, 'Une prise de conscience raciale en France, où le sujet reste tabou,' *The New York Times*, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/fr/2020/07/15/world/europe/race-france.html> [accessed 22 September 2022]

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] The fragmentation being in relation to the appellation of what is commonly referred to as someone being 'français de souche,' which juxtaposes one's level of *francité* with their level of whiteness.

[14] N.a., 'Politique la démocratie en danger', *Le Monde*, 11 December 1990, <https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1990/12/11/politique-la-democratie-en-danger_4166132_1819218.html> [accessed 25 March 2024].

[15] Marie des Neiges Léonard, *Racial Diversity in Contemporary France: The Case of Colorblindness* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022).

era and the current neocolonial period. The third chapter of *Péyi An Nou* shows Oublié and Rousseau attending a conference hosted by Université Paris 8, with French political scientist Françoise Vergès, who is an invited speaker at the conference. Speaking on forgotten history, or rather, history that has been intentionally obfuscated, and France's Eurocentric approach to storytelling and recounting the past, Vergès hypothesizes that 'la France est centrée sur elle-même. La France, c'est l'Hexagone et c'est tout ! L'outre-mer constitue un point aveugle dans l'histoire française. Vous savez, ce truc qu'on voit pas.'[16] Fundamentally, Vergès alludes to the present continuance of colonialism, or in other terms, neocolonialism. This assertion is premised on the fact that these former colonies maintain some autonomy as departments although their conversion to departments in 1946 is more symbolic than practical.

Extending the discussion of invisibility, history, and memory, Étienne Achille, Charles Forsdick, and Lydie Moudileno highlight the French intelligentsia's persistent reluctance to adopt a postcolonial understanding of the Republic.[17] In parallel, Stéphanie Condon, a researcher at the Institut National d'Études Démographiques (INED), has conducted extensive work on the BUMIDOM, examining its implications for social class, gender, and inequality. She explains that 'l'appel à l'émigration visait les jeunes adultes des milieux populaires, le plus souvent peu scolarisés et ayant des perspectives professionnelles limitées dans les économies insulaires.'[18] This selective migration policy is emblematic of broader issues that remain largely unacknowledged within dominant French narratives. The unwillingness of intellectual and political circles to fully engage with the legacy of the BUMIDOM and France's (neo-)colonial relationship with its overseas departments is closely tied to processes of racialisation. As historian Sylvain Pattieu observes, 'une telle persistance [du traitement] pose la question d'une ligne de couleur à la française, moins rigide et moins aisément appréhensible que dans les sociétés caractérisées par une ségrégation institutionnalisée.'[19] His analysis underscores the subtler but nonetheless pervasive forms of racial differentiation embedded within the French Republican framework. The element of 'othering' and the construction of second-class citizens is thus essential to understanding the complex relationship that inhabitants of the DROM have with their status as French citizens.

The invisibility of the DROM is no oversight, as literary scholar Katelyn Knox argues. Knox postulates that '[i]n France's official historical discourse, the histories of its former colonies (and current DROM) and its racial and ethnic minority population have been cordoned off from "national" history.'[20] While the reasons behind this exclusion are complex and beyond the scope of this article, I aim to highlight the significance of resisting such erasure, recognising the transnational histories that have profoundly shaped countless lives.[21]

---

[16] Oublié and Rousseau, *Péyi An Nou*, p. 37.

[17] Etienne Achille, Charles Forsdick and Lydie Moudileno (eds.) *Postcolonial Realms of Memory: Sites and Symbols in Modern France*, Contemporary French and Francophone Cultures: 68 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), p. 1.

[18] Stéphanie Condon, 'Entre stratégies individuelles et stratégies de l'État : le genre de l'émigration antillaise dans les années 1960,' *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, no. 51 (July 1, 2020): pp. 119–41 (p. 123), <https://doi.org/10.4000/clio.18071. > You can see Oublié and Rousseau meet with Condon beginning on p. 159.

[19] Sylvain Pattieu, 'Un traitement spécifique des migrations d'outre-mer: le BUMIDOM (1963–1982) et ses ambiguïtés', *Politix*, 116 (2016): pp. 81–113 (p. 112). <https://doi.org/10.3917/pox.116.0081>

[20] Katelyn Knox, *Race on Display in 20th- and 21st-Century France* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), p. 10–11.

[21] See Claire Ducournau, 'Literary Prestige', trans. by Andrea Lloyd, in: *Postcolonial Realms of Memory: Sites and Symbols in Modern France*, ed. by Etienne Achille, Charles Forsdick and Lydie Moudileno (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020): p. 68; Antonia Wimbush, 'A Counter-Memory of the BUMIDOM Through Documentary: *L'Avenir est ailleurs* (2007) and *BUMIDOM: Des Français venus d'outre-mer* (2010)', < https://doi.org/10.3828/cfc.2023.12>; *Contemporary French Civilization* 48 (2023: 195–215; Malika Danican, 'L'influence des relations familiales dans le

Assembling an Archive of Resistance

What exactly is an 'archive of resistance'? Or, on a more fundamental level, what does it mean to resist or be involved in a movement of resistance as it is situated in literature, visual culture and knowledge production? To explore the creation of an 'archive of resistance,' I draw on Gil Hochberg's *Becoming Palestine: Toward an Archival Imagination of the Future* (2021), which informs my understanding of how constructing a future remains deeply rooted in both the present and the past. Hochberg's use of the term 'archival imagination' is premised on the idea that texts, as cultural artefacts, 'operate in the service of the future [to] advance a temporality that exceeds historical causality.'[22] I connect the notions of 'archive of resistance' and 'archival imagination' to support an understanding of *Péyi An Nou* as a cultural artefact that envisions a future where engaging with painful histories is no longer taboo or purposefully elided. Moreover, this connection of terms allows for the 'blur[ring] [of] the distinction between official archives and recognized archival documents on the one hand, and the alternative, impossible, or imaginary archives on the other hand'.[23] In the case of Oublié and Rousseau's graphic novel, the reader is met with both official and alternative archival materials. The official materials include government documents such as legal documents, scholarly articles and data, and newspaper clippings, while the alternative archival materials comprise of, primarily, the human archival sources of those who themselves were brought to mainland France through the BUMIDOM or their descendants who are sharing their stories. When using the term 'human archival sources', I am referring to the embodiment of histories and the tradition of oral history that allows for the passing down of stories that, perhaps, would not have been shared otherwise.

Literary scholar Lia Brozgal's *Absent the Archive: Cultural Traces of Massacre in Paris, 17 October 1961* (2020) also takes on the idea of official and unofficial archives and focuses on the Paris massacre of 1961. Brozgal introduces the concept of the 'anarchive', an alternative form of archive and emphasizes that 'archives are all around us, unguarded by archons who would limit our access or impose a single interpretation.'[24] *Péyi An Nou* exemplifies this notion through Oublié and Rousseau's integration use of both official and unofficial sources, as well as their engagement with individuals directly impacted by the BUMIDOM.

What is particularly striking in *Péyi An Nou* is the blurring of these official and alternative materials, as the texts overlaps them with little clear distinction; an approach that resonates with Hochberg's concept of archival imagination mentioned earlier.[25] For example, Oublié's maternal grandfather went to France in 1974, although not directly through the BUMIDOM agency unlike many of his peers, while his wife remained in Guadeloupe with their children. Oublié then combines reconstructing her family's history with developing a graphic narrative, specifically, a *bande dessinée documentaire*. This format enables her to bear witness to and critique France's exploitation of the DROM, a dynamic rooted in the *loi de départementalisation* enacted on 19 March 1946, under provisional President Charles de Gaulle, aimed at maintaining control over the 'quatre

processus migratoire: Le cas de l'émigration guadeloupéenne avec le BUMIDOM (1963–1981)', *Enfances Familles Générations* 43 (2023) < http://journals.openedition.org/efg/17324> [accessed 15 July 2025]

[22] Gil Z. Hochberg, *Becoming Palestine: Toward an Archival Imagination of the Future* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), p. 4.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Lia Brozgal, *Absent the Archive: Cultural Traces of a Massacre in Paris, 17 October 1961* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021), p. 114.

[25] The mixing of sources and the layout of various panels symbolizes the *métissage* that has taken place and that is currently ongoing. Oublié and Rousseau's decision to use varying sources speaks to the level of diversity that is ongoing regarding where the narratives within the text are coming from.

vieilles colonies': Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion, and French Guiana.

This critique extends beyond the narrative itself into the visual and paratextual dimensions of *Péyi An Nou*, particularly its epitext, which contributes to the construction of an 'archive of resistance'. Here, iconic images commonly associated with France – such as the Eiffel Tower and the Arc de Triomphe – are juxtaposed with a sandy Caribbean beach and a trail of footprints, visual elements that challenge conventional representations of French national space. The first detail to capture the reader's attention is the clear turquoise colour of the water of the Caribbean Sea, immediately situating the text outside of Europe. The trail of footprints in the sand that leads into the water appears as representative of the emigrants who left their islands for hexagonal France – or, rather, the metropole as the country is commonly referred to, 'which indexes the physical distance from the administrative center as well as its colonial past.'[26] What is striking, however, is that in the distance, the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, and *le drapeau tricolore* – all symbols of hexagonal France and French patrimony – appear as if situated on an island. In the foreground, the footprints lead in a single direction, away from one island and toward another, disappearing into the water. This visual metaphor bridges the mainland and the DROM, evoking the waves of emigration from 1963 to 1982, even though no dates appear on the front cover.

As a graphic novel that blurs any clear boundaries between primary testimony and secondary analysis, *Péyi An Nou* situates itself within a growing body of scholarship that recognizes graphic narratives as serious cultural and pedagogical tools due to their engagement with memory, history, and resistance. Robert G. Weiner et al.'s important study on graphic novels and archives has advanced the understanding of graphic novels and comics and their relevance to historical discourse and education.[27] In a section on 'Graphic Novels and the Untapped Audience,' librarian Ruth Boyer notes that '[m]any librarians today embrace graphic novels as an effective way to attract reluctant readers and students into their libraries.'[28] Beyond simply attracting readers, graphic novels like *Péyi An Nou* invite engagement with complex historical narratives through accessible yet layered forms. By combining image, text, and intertextual references, the medium challenges conventional historiographical boundaries and legitimizes alternative ways of knowing. In this way, *Péyi An Nou* participates in the construction of an archive of resistance: not only through its content, which exposes the realities of (neo)colonial migration and domination, but also through its very form, which disrupts traditional archival hierarchies and foregrounds marginalized voices. For example, in *On Black Bande Dessinées and Transcolonial Power*, Michelle Bumatay examines how Black Francophone artists repurpose this 'imperially introduced medium' to express cultural diversity, articulate complexity, and challenge stereotypes.[29] While *bande dessinées* have long been excluded from the larger canon of historical, literary and cultural production generally perceived as being 'academic' and 'intellectually valid', their unique interweaving of visual storytelling and critical analysis offers a compelling space for confronting silences within official archives. As *Péyi An Nou* makes clear, the colonial past is not past; rather, in our neocolonial presence, it continues to shape the lived experiences of those who navigate its legacies. As put by Oublié in *Péyi An Nou*, '[c]'est là toute la complexité de l'histoire de notre pays [la France]. En même temps que la France

[26] Kathe Managan, 'Péyi an Nou: Conceptualizing Language, Place, Race, and Identity in Guadeloupe,' *Sargasso* I&II (2011/2010): pp. 147–61 (p. 150).
[27] Robert G. Weiner et al., *Graphic Novels and Comics in Libraries and Archives: Essays on Readers, Research, History and Cataloging* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2010).
[28] Ibid., 141.
[29] Michelle Bumatay, *On Black Bande Dessinées and Transcolonial Power* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2025), p. 23.

offre des opportunités à ses citoyens pour changer de vie, elle exerce sur eux et leurs territoires d'origine des rapports de domination.'[30] Many left for the metropole in search of a better life, but still with hopes of returning home in the future.[31]

A personal encounter with her grandfather marks a pivotal emotional moment in the text, prompting Oublié's desire to uncover her family's migratory history and the legacy of the BUMIDOM. Speaking with someone who was able to return home, Oublié engages in a quiet moment with her grandfather. In bed and visibly weakened, he rests while gazing at a photo that appears to show a young Oublié with her family. Given how much time has passed since they last saw each other, he pointedly asks why she has not visited in the three years since. Yet, before giving her a chance to answer, he remarks, 'c'est comme ça avec les petits métros… vous ne venez plus trop une fois que vous êtes grands…'[32] This moment is significant: it is the first time Oublié's identity is questioned in the text, and it sparks her interest for tracing her family's story in connection to the BUMIDOM, which she still knows little about at this point in the narrative. The first chapter, set in August 2015, opens with Oublié sitting in bed with a notepad and pen, jotting down ideas for what will become *Péyi An Nou*. Reflecting to herself, she says, '[j]e me prépare à l'opération "Restore the story,"' signaling both a personal and historical project of recovery and storytelling that defines the bande dessinée's approach.[33]

A graphic novel with the intent to 'restore history' aligns closely with the genre of the *bande dessinée documentaire*, which is rooted in engaging with non-fictional testimonies. As such, the graphic novel not only recounts stories of the past but also uses them to generate possibilities for restoring the present: to correct, or at least attempt to reconstruct, histories that have been lost to better inform future intellectual and historical understanding. As a literary and cultural medium, the *bande dessinée* operates differently from a conventional novel: rather than relying solely on extended prose, it uses the interplay of image and text to generate meaning and intertextual connections. Specifically, Hillary Chute is interested in how comics or graphic novels deal with 'devastating public histories', just as I am with this article on *Péyi An Nou* and the BUMIDOM.[34] The back-and-forth between reading and looking is what, for me, allows for the graphic novel to come to life and it is within the blank spaces, that Chute calls 'disjunctive,' that much of the intellectual and interpretive labour on the part of the reader takes place.[35] In the case of *Péyi An Nou*, text and image are strikingly balanced. Neither mode is privileged over the other, allowing for a narrative structure that foregrounds nuance and seeks to hyper-contextualize events as they unfold. In this way, *Péyi An Nou* exemplifies how the *bande dessinée documentaire* can function not just as a medium of remembrance, but as a form of historiographic intervention by restoring silenced narratives through the unique interplay of image and text.

Narratives of Resistance

The work of Oublié and Rousseau can be understood as a form of resistance against dominant narratives that frame projects like *Péyi An Nou* as threats to national cohesion. While a comprehensive account of such instances within hexagonal France exceeds the scope of this

[30] Oublié and Rousseau, *Péyi An Nou*, p. 187

[31] 'Pour eux, utiliser le BUMIDOM, c'était une opportunité pour venir en métropole sans payer le billet, avoir un meilleur niveau de vie, gagner de l'argent ici pour construire une maison là-bas.' (Ibid., 186)

[32] Ibid., 5.

[33] Ibid., 7.

[34] Hillary Chute, 'Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Novels', *PMLA* 123 (2008): pp. 452–65 (p. 453).

[35] Ibid., p. 452.

analysis, a particularly telling example emerges at the level of executive political discourse. French President Emmanuel Macron, for instance, has invoked terms such as *séparatisme* and, more recently, *communautarisme* to describe perceived challenges to the unity of the French Republic. These terms carry significant socio-cultural weight, especially in relation to debates over French identity and, more broadly, the ideological construction of the nation-state. Macron's *jeu de mot* according to an article in *Marianne* is due to 'communautarisme' being a term that is more widely used amongst the public.[36] The online article includes a video of Macron speaking at a press conference where he explicity states: '[j]e ne suis pas à l'aise avec le mot communautarisme … ce que nous devons combattre, c'est le séparatisme.'[37] His remarks are reminiscent of several current world leaders, such as United States President Donald Trump, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and the former Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and many others who have alluded to this proclaimed 'crisis' and 'moral panic' with regard to migrants and the morphing of 'traditional' culture and values.

This rhetoric of 'cultural threat' and exclusion echoes longstanding colonial logics, evident not only in contemporary politics but also in historical policies such as the *loi de départementalisation*, which masked unequal power dynamics under the guise of republican integration. The law was not an altruistic project designed to bring equal rights and resources to those living in former colonies who, through this legislation, became full French citizens residing in the DROM. Rather, Oublié and Rousseau challenge the universalist rhetoric that seeks to deflect or suppress criticism of the French state by exposing its more sinister historical and contemporary actions, such as the Paris massacre of 1961, nuclear testing in French Polynesia, and the death of Adama Traoré in 2016, among other egregious events. *Péyi An Nou*'s engagement with testimony not only underscores the significant number of individuals who migrated to hexagonal France under the BUMIDOM but also foregrounds how these state policies shaped lives across generations. While rooted in Oublié's personal family history, the narrative expands to encompass the experiences of many others who share similar trajectories, offering a collective account through the lens of individual memory. Wimbush has argued that Oublié and Rousseau's work, due to the plurality of voices within the text, has weakened the central argument or premise of the text to 'restore' history or at least open a line of communication between the past and the present.[38] I, on the other hand, find the plurivocality of the text to be helpful in the construction of this 'archive of resistance' that I reference throughout this article. Through its engagement with multiple narratives, *Péyi An Nou* succeeds in constructing a story that not only reconstitutes a long-overlooked aspect of French history, but also creates space for subjects whose identities exist in a state of liminality; individuals who share a national identity yet possess distinct regional affiliations, such as Oublié herself, who identifies as Franco-Guadeloupean.[39] From the beginning, Oublié and Rousseau interact with the plurality of voices of those involved directly with the BUMIDOM and those who are descendants of the BUMIDOM. I contend that this engagement strengthens their argument as it adds legitimacy to the graphic novel, and the medium, as it seeks to share a history 'from

[36] Hadrien Mathoux, 'Pourquoi Emmanuel Macron parle désormais de "séparatisme" et plus de "communautarisme,"' *Marianne*, 2020, <https://www.marianne.net/politique/pourquoi-emmanuel-macron-parle-desormais-de-separatisme-et-plus-de-communautarisme≥ [accessed 19 September 2022]. Furthermore, these two terms have been weaponized against people of colour in France to silence them as they vocalize issues of injustice.
[37] Ibid.
[38] See Antonia Wimbush, 'Depicting French Caribbean Migration through *bande dessinée*', *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 21 (2018): pp. 9 – 29 (p. 21). <https://doi.org/10.1386/ijfs.21.1-2.9_1>
[39] By accommodation, I am referring to the plurality of voices that are given space to co-exist in the narrative without prioritizing any particular voice over another.

below' to employ Lucien Febvre's term, who views 'l'histoire vue d'en bas' as a means of eliding the subordination of certain historical events by those who maintain political and social power.[40]

The BUMIDOM as a historical event and government agency is not a topic of immense popularity, even today, despite the number of scholarly articles, documentaries, novels, and now graphic novels that attempt to recount the events that led to about two hundred thousand DROM inhabitants being brought to mainland France. Called 'un chapitre oublié de l'Histoire de France' by film director and author Jadine Labbé Pacheco, Oublié and Rousseau's graphic novel brings testimonies and findings and accommodates a plurality of voices and experiences to construct a collective remembering of the BUMIDOM. They create a communal space for the descendants of the BUMIDOM who have had to 'discover' and 'construct' their identities as they trace their lineage to the DROM from hexagonal France.[41] The graphic novel, as a medium, has the potential to engender 'un plaisir né du jeu entre la représentation de l'auteur et la représentation du lecteur', according to Éric Dacheux who further postulates that:

> par son dispositif singulier, elle est un jeu entre la représentation visuelle (textes et images) proposées par l'auteur et la représentation animée et sonore du lecteur qui donne vie au récit (mouvement, durée, etc.) Il n'y a donc ni rejet de l'image, ni sidération par l'image, ni dégoût du texte, ni 'textolaterie', mais un jeu texte/image qui, de la BD muette au roman graphique, conduit toujours le lecteur à une activité critique de déconstruction/reconstruction de sens.[42]

Through its unique blend of text and image, the medium invites the reader into an active process of meaning-making, one that resists both the rejection and overvaluation of either mode. In *Péyi An Nou*, this interplay is particularly powerful: vivid visual elements – ranging from the epitext and communal scenes in Guadeloupe to conference spaces in Paris – substantiate its exploration of Francophone Caribbean identity and the broader DROM experience. As Oublié traces her journey between Paris and Pointe-à-Pitre, she reconstitutes her identity as a Franco-Guadeloupean subject. The medium of the graphic novel thus offers a distinctive mode of historical engagement, one that departs from traditional forms such as documentary film or academic writing by combining critical insight with visual and narrative creativity.

Postcolonial Accommodations

Péyi An Nou is a product of accommodation as well as a method of accommodation. As a project, it is highly ambitious and controversial: controversial in the fact that it sheds light on a little examined period in French postcolonial history that could be a contribution to the very 'séparatisme' that Macron evokes. It is ambitious in its task of both attempting to fill a gap in Oublié's familial history and reconfiguring French national history to give a voice to those silenced by universalism and French Republicanism. Accommodation, as a theory, has been anchored in

[40] Lucien Febvre, 'Albert Mathiez : un tempérament, une éducation,' *Annales* 4 (1932): pp. 573–76 (p. 576), <https://doi.org/10.3406/ahess.1932.1357.>

[41] See Jadine Labbé Pacheco, 'Bumidom, un chapître oublié de l'Histoire de France', Boukan (2019). <https://www.pressreader.com/france/boukan-le-courrier-ultramarin/20190701/282995403397792?srsltid=AfmBOoqZBH9i6W46DBwTboYeVO6l6SA2t6ezc5u1eBtT__sQp3jSuEsL> [accessed 10 July 2024].

[42] Éric Dacheux, 'La bande dessinée, une représentation critique de notre monde de représentation', in *Bande dessinée et le lien social*, ed. by Éric Dacheux (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2019), pp. 9–32 (p. 9).

social psychology and communication studies.[43] In literary studies, Edward C. Knox argues for a 'literature of accommodation', contending that literature speaks to 'integration or adaptation, to incorporate nuances of congruence and reconciliation, of allowances made and recognition of a new norm to which to adhere.'[44] Knox's framework, bringing together integration, adaptation, congruence, and reconciliation, proves particularly relevant to my analysis of *Péyi An Nou*, by enabling a reading of accommodation as a dynamic postcolonial process. What I term 'postcolonial accommodation' draws on decolonial methodologies to advocate for national narratives that fully acknowledge and integrate the complexities of colonial and postcolonial histories, such as in the case of France and the BUMIDOM.[45] This concept also entails a critical stance toward neocolonialism, which continues to obscure historical accountability and enables imperial powers to distance themselves from their colonial pasts. *Péyi An Nou* exemplifies postcolonial accommodation through its situatedness in the Caribbean (and, to a lesser extent, the Indian Ocean, in the case of Réunion), as it weaves together historical and contemporary experiences while imagining a future inclusive of both the positive and the traumatic dimensions of French overseas histories.

The graphic novel thus belongs to a body of works that not only promote but enact postcolonial accommodation. This becomes especially evident when considering the extensive research conducted by Oublié and Rousseau in assembling the narrative, which moves between France and Guadeloupe and draws on a range of archival materials. The text also carries a subtle yet potent form of activism, particularly through the incorporation of others' testimonies. In doing so, it resists homogenising identities under the label of 'French' and instead offers a decolonial engagement with the multiplicity of subject positions shaped by the legacy of empire. For example, in chapter six, Oublié receives an invitation from Phillipe Pierre-Charles, a founding member of the *Groupe Révolution Socialiste* to meet in Fort-de-France.[46] This being Oublié's first interview in Guadeloupe for her research trip, she is excited, but she also grapples with the complex history of the DROM since their change in status from colonies to departments. In a striking moment, Pierre-Charles shares his personal experience of the BUMIDOM in a conversation with Oublié and Rousseau. His image dominates nearly the entire page, with his monologue unfolding in a circular layout that visually reinforces the weight and continuity of his testimony. In a sombre tone, he reflects on the pervasive sense of hopelessness that many in the DROM felt in the period leading up to the BUMIDOM, a sentiment that ultimately drove so many to migrate to France through the agency. He begins by stating that:

> On ne pouvait pas non plus être en permanence sur tous les fronts… Convaincre le people du bien-fondé de l'indépendance… Convaincre le jeune de ses chances de réussite sur l'île. Convaincre l'ouvrier agricole de son rôle essentiel. Convaincre les travailleurs de la

[43] See, for example, Howard Giles, America L. Edwards, and Joseph B. Walther, 'Communication Accommodation Theory: Past Accomplishments, Current Trends, and Future Prospects,' *Language Sciences (Oxford)* 99 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2023.101571.>; Howard Giles, *Communication Accommodation Theory: Negotiating Personal Relationships and Social Identities across Contexts* (Cambridge: University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316226537.>

[44] Edward C. Knox, 'A Literature of Accommodation,' *French Politics, Culture & Society* 21 (2003): pp. 95–110 (p. 95).

[45] For instance, see Walter Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), which argues against the colonial foundation of modernity as they articulate that decoloniality is not simply a critique, but also a generative project to construct alternative models of knowing and being that extend beyond coloniality and capitalism.

[46] Oublié and Rousseau, *Péyi An Nou*, p. 91.

> nécessité de prendre le pouvoir. Convaincre les progressistes de France de soutenir leurs confrères de Martinique et de Guadeloupe…[47]

Pierre-Charles is pointing out the evident economic crisis of the time that pushed DROM inhabitants, mostly men, to move to mainland France and be joined by their families later. The opportunities presented to individuals via the BUMIDOM were, however, limited, as Anny Dominique Curtius explains:

> Par le BUMIDOM, les Antillais, Guyanais et Réunionnais viennent donc occuper en France des fonctions dans le secteur paramédical et des emplois ménagers après avoir reçu une formation dans des centres – celui de Crouy-sur-Ourcq en Seine-et-Marne est l'un des plus connus. Ils exercent aussi des métiers de rang inférieur dans le bâtiment et la métallurgie, ou dans le secteur tertiaire, au sein des administrations publiques telles que la police, les douanes, la poste, les transports, la santé (aides-soignants, agents hospitaliers).[48]

During a meeting that Oublié has planned with Léo and Gosier, two men who went to mainland France via the BUMIDOM, at the beginning of chapter eight, she asks everyone what their first jobs were when they arrived in France:

> Person 1: 'Je tirais les cables pour installer les lignes téléphoniques.'
> Person 2: 'Moi j'étais fille de salle à l'hôpital.'
> Person 3: 'Je faisais des ménages chez des particuliers du 16^{e} à Paris.'
> Person 4: 'Moi j'avais passé le concours de facteur avant de partir, donc en arrivant, j'ai tout de suite eu un boulot de postier.'[49]

These first-person accounts of those who went to France but have since returned are what make *Péyi An Nou* an accommodating project, which allows for personal accounts of migration via the BUMIDOM that makes space for their inclusion in French history.

To think of accommodation is to think of inclusion, particularly, the inclusion and incorporation of several voices. This is illustrative of Bakhtin's theory of polyphony, which draws on the musical term to refer to two or more independent melody lines to combine sounds – voices.[50] Returning to Wimbush's criticism of *Péyi An Nou* mentioned earlier, which stipulates that the graphic novel 'fails to exploit fully the potential of the medium in depicting the entire range of experiences of twentieth-century Caribbean migration'.[51] It is this 'lack' of range that is the strength of *Péyi An Nou* and as Laurence Grove points out, '[t]he fact that an individual *planche* of a BD can be static rather than just part of the linear progression allows the form to evoke in a way that other adaptations, such as those of the cinema, cannot do.'[52] Oublié and Rousseau's

---

[47] Ibid.
[48] Anny Dominique Curtius, 'Utopies du BUMIDOM: Construire l'avenir dans un "là-bas" postcontact,' *French Forum* 35 (2010): pp. 135–55 (p. 139–40).
[49] Oublié and Rousseau, *Péyi An Nou*, p. 113.
[50] See Jie Zhang and Hongbing Yu, 'Between Interpretation and the Subject: Revisiting Bakhtin's Theory of Polyphony,' *Semiotica: Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies/Revue de l'Association Internationale de Sémiotique* 2021 (2021): pp. 61–72, <https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2019-0086.>
[51] Wimbush, 'Depicting', p. 12.
[52] Laurence Grove, *Text/Image Mosaics in French Culture: Emblems and Comic Strips*, Studies in European Cultural Transition; Volume 32 (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 213, < https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315241630.>

graphic novel has very specific goals in mind: the primary being for Oublié to reconcile or attempt to reconcile an identity that is split between her life in mainland France and in Guadeloupe and the second, to uncover or unravel, rather, a complex piece of French history in a new form – the graphic novel. To think of accommodation is to think of inclusion, specifically, the integration of multiple voices and perspectives.[53]

Conclusion

Jessica Oublié and Marie-Ange Rousseau's *Péyi An Nou* stands as a significant contribution to the historiography of the BUMIDOM and to broader debates around race, identity, and (post)colonial memory in France. As the first graphic novel to represent this complex chapter of French history, it blends textual and visual narratives to create a multi-layered, affective form of historical testimony. Through its integration of personal and collective memory, archival documents, oral histories, and visual symbolism, *Péyi An Nou* constructs what this article has described as an 'archive of resistance': a space in which marginalized voices, silenced by official Republican narratives and the legacy of colonialism, can be heard and legitimised.

Far from simply recounting historical events, the graphic novel performs an act of 'postcolonial accommodation' by weaving together regional and national identities, lived experience and historical trauma, and visual and textual modes of storytelling. In doing so, it challenges dominant frameworks of universalism, calls attention to the persistent inequalities between hexagonal France and the DROM and makes visible the long-unacknowledged legacies of the BUMIDOM. By foregrounding the perspective of a 'history from below', Oublié and Rousseau engage in a form of decolonial knowledge production that is at once accessible and intellectually rigorous.

Péyi An Nou thus asserts the political and historiographic potential of the *bande dessinée documentaire* as a medium. It reminds us that how we tell history, and from whose vantage point, remains a vital question. As this graphic novel demonstrates, stories that merge the personal with the political are essential to challenging archival silences and reconstructing a more inclusive collective memory.

DON JOSEPH
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

[53] Although there is much overlap, I think through the terms of 'integration' and 'inclusion' as different with the former referring to the placement of marginalized subjects into existing structure or system, while the latter refers to the changing of structures and systems for everyone, which further highlights diversity.

BOOK REVIEWS

La communauté terrestre. By ACHILLE MBEMBE. Paris: La Découverte, 2023. 206 pp. Pb 20.00€. ISBN: 978-2-348-07238-3.

Achille Mbembe opens his essay *La communauté terrestre* with a painfully lucid assessment of our world. He lays bare a reality marked by division and conflict, where the accumulation of impossibility – 'impossibles rencontres, impossibles partages, [...] impossibilité d'une multiplicité de mondes' (pp. 185–186) – arises in a world where exposure to and encounter with others is inevitable, yet increasingly seen as a threat, a risk. In this light, it is impossible not to think of the recent world events, particularly the craving for destruction and annihilation that we witness every day.

Mbembe, in fact, situates this impulse toward conquest, domination, extraction, expropriation, massacre – to name but a few – within a historical continuum that links these phenomena to coloniality. This colonial continuum connects what he calls 'l'eurocentrisme primitif' (p. 180), which, since the fifteenth century, has used processes of racialization and the subsequent classification and hierarchization of the living to determine who and what could be spared or sacrificed for the benefit of the ruling class, to 'l'eurocentrisme tardif' of the twenty-first century, characterized by barricading, isolationism, and incarceration, which ultimately legitimizes the most violent acts (Chapter Six).

In this context, Mbembe argues that the growing permanence of technology – what he broadly terms 'des machines à images, des machines fictionnelles' – signals a shift toward 'colonialisme techno-moléculaire' (p. 125). Put more simply, this notion suggests that tech giants have not only become active drivers of extraction and predation, whether through data exploitation or the environmental devastation linked to technological advancement, for example, but their proliferation has also intensified fractures both among humans and between humans and the rest of the living world (Chapter Four).

By connecting technological acceleration to the increasing control of life and lived environments, as well as the relentless consumption of resources, Mbembe outlines a profoundly fractured world – one where the possibility of repair and shared futures appears almost unimaginable. As I noted at the start of my review, Mbembe's portrayal of our world is strikingly painful precisely because of its lucidity. Yet, he refuses the foreclosure of alternative imaginaries, calling for a 'communauté terrestre' (p. 156; Chapter Five).

Mbembe conceptualizes this community of the Earth as a way to reclaim the right for all to inhabit it ('droit d'hebérgement', p. 88), challenging the logic of territorial appropriation and barricading. He argues that to live on Earth is to acknowledge that we are all passersby, deeply interconnected with and dependent on one another, as well as the living beings that surround us. This understanding involves, as he puts it, 'faire de la place' – making room for the rest (p. 76). Therefore, Mbembe's proposal brings about the hope for a radical imaginary of the Earth, one that he suggests might be the 'dernière utopie' (p. 72). This vision calls for a reimagining of how we, as humans, inhabit the Earth. In this reimagined future, Mbembe explains, lies the potential to repair, share, and care for all human and non-human life, as well as lived environments (Chapters Two and Three).

Against the devastation wrought by eurocentrism, both 'primitif" and 'tardif', *La communauté terrestre* is also an invitation to turn to preexisting epistemologies of coexistence and

care. Drawing on the Dogon people's belief system, Mbembe speaks of a form of coexistence that encompasses all that once was and is, the living and the dead, grounded in communality and a disposition toward listening and attentiveness. Such (re)familiarisation with what Mbembe terms 'les métaphysiques africaines anciennes' is perhaps where optimism lies amidst the horror: the recognition that there once were, and still are, ways of envisioning life differently, thus offering the possibility to imagine the world of today anew (Chapter One).

JENNIFER BOUM MAKE
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

De Langue à Langue : L'Hospitalité de la Traduction. By SOULEYMANE BACHIR DIAGNE. Paris: Albin Michel, 2024. 176 pp. Pb 7.90€. ISBN: 978-2226496188.

The book is a collection of lectures delivered, by invitation, at the Frobenius Institute in Frankfurt, Germany's oldest research institute mainly interested in ethnological and historical research. The lectures were delivered in English from April to June 2015 on the theme of 'Translation'. It is rather interesting to note how translation permeates the entire enterprise here, as the language of the host institute is indeed German. Reminiscent of medieval translation practice, it would be difficult, and perhaps futile, to determine the language of the original from which the English lectures had derived and subsequently been turned into French for this book. Perhaps yet again there is rather a rhizomic relationship between the various incarnations of the texts or lectures, each taking on a life of its own or, to draw on Walter Benjamin, ensuring its own after-life. Even this review is steeped in translation, as it is an English review of a book in French. These rather translation-specific musings are inspired by the very theme covered by the lectures and the following mention in the 'Acknowledgements': 'Je remercie également l'Institut d'Études Avancées de Nantes qui a accueilli et soutenu le travail de transformation de ces conférences en un ouvrage…'. The 'travail de transformation' would certainly involve a great deal of translating or turning the English lectures into French and organising them into a book. The author thanks the hosts at the Frobenius Institute for the invitation and for their 'hospitalité', a play on the theme that runs through the series of lectures or chapters and spelled out in the book's subtitle, 'L'hospitalité de la traduction'.

Published by Albin Michel in its series 'Espaces Libres – Idées', the book raises the question whether the discourse on translation in contexts of colonisation can rise above the paradigm of domination grounded in an inherent power asymmetry. Overall, the author assumes a positivist stance, viewing translation as an ethical expression, which by its very nature is bound to account for the diversity and equality of languages. Translation is an act of bridgebuilding and enhancing understanding between disparate language cultures. For Diagne, to translate is to show hospitality in the receiving language for what is carried over from the source language. It is also to seek out and highlight those universals of human experience that unite us in our plurality.

The sense of language equality and reciprocity of language in translation conveyed here is akin to a humanistic conceptualisation with a utopian streak, given the not-so-equal relations of power characteristic of colonial encounters. While the ethical pursuit of equality and reciprocity is commendable, the burden of hospitality seems to be weighted on the side of the subaltern, who must tread carefully in using the colonial language, whether for creativity (as 'traducteur') or simply to transmit African orality or logos (as 'truchement'). Editors or publishers in the metropole might

ask what use it is to produce translations that dwell on the specificities of colonized language cultures yet are unpalatable in the receiving colonial language. Citing the controversy surrounding the choice of translator for Amanda Gorman's poems into Dutch, the author seems to wonder what the fuss is all about, implying that the preference for a translator with a similar background or experience as the poet may be an inhospitable act. This view overlooks the fact that such controversies only arise when it has to do with the translation of minority language cultures. It also reminds one of the Négritude or Senghorian universalist approach, dictated by a desire to seek equality or recognition through performativity and mimicry of the colonial discourse within the framework of French-African relations. Rather than retribution or redress for the benefit of colonized cultures, hospitality here may seem to foreshadow assimilation or annexation by the colonizing culture as a precondition for harmony. However, it must be said that Diagne has consistently upheld and defended the autonomy and sanctity of African languages and cultures in his extensive and impressive body of work. The Négritude line of reasoning implied here was seriously attacked by the Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, when he uttered the now famous critique: 'A tiger does not proclaim its tigritude, he pounces'. Indeed, given the power asymmetry and the historical reality involved, it seems incumbent upon the former coloniser to lead the way in embracing hospitality as an ethical approach in overcoming difference and achieving equality and reciprocity. That said, the author makes a fine and enlightening distinction between 'truchement' and 'traducteur' (see Chapter 2), when it comes to the representation of orality in writing of orally-based cultures translated into colonial languages.

It seems rather ironic that an ethic of hospitality in translation praxis in the context of colonisation is the overriding theme for lectures presented at the Frobenius Institute, given the well-documented and unflattering history of Leo Frobenius in colonial Africa. The colonial enterprise of this self-taught German anthropologist was by no means hospitable, and it makes one wonder how receptive he would have been of this overture towards hospitality by a postcolonial subject of African descent. Leo Frobenius, like most European colonial adventurers, viewed the African continent with disdain and condescension, a tabula rasa to be civilized but also to be exploited and looted. Space does not allow for an elaborate account of his misdeeds here, although it is worth pointing out that he was in such denial of the historical depth of African civilisations that he created an imaginary universe dubbed African Atlantis with pre-existing non-African cultures from which African civilisations must have developed. He thus claimed that many of the artefacts he found during his expeditions were of non-African origin. Frobenius has also been accused of using his expeditions to loot items of cultural value from the continent. Given the current discourse on restitution and reparation regarding African art removed or stolen from the continent, a subject broached in Chapter three of this book, it is rather surprising that the misgivings regarding Frobenius and the German colonial enterprise are hardly mentioned. Signalling the omission of any incursion into Frobenius's work in Africa does not imply it was a deliberate decision on the part of the author of the book under review. It is rather a reminder that contexts matter, so do historical facts, and showcasing a translation ethic of hospitality in (post)colonial contexts calls for true reckoning on both sides of the colonial divide.

The historical dimension of the book is quite rich and extensive, stretching from prehistorical and pre-industrial times characterised by orality to contemporary experiences marked by literacy, writing and modernity. The book provides insights into translation thought and practices indigenous to Africa, opening up inroads for contributions to contemporary global translation discourse. However, the lack of engagement with current scholarship on translation

theory and practice on the African context is noticeable. The book could have enhanced its currency and relevance by engaging more with current trends in (post)colonial translation studies. Notwithstanding, it is a valuable reference for scholars or anyone with an interest in an outside-the-box and interdisciplinary approach to understanding translation matters in colonial historiography.

PAUL F. BANDIA
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

***Le Polar de la Caraïbe francophone*.** By EMELINE PIERRE. Montréal: Les Presses de L'Université de Montréal, 2024. 273 pp. Pb. $32.93. ISBN: 978–2–760649–88–0.

Guadeloupean-born scholar Emeline Pierre's second monograph offers an extensive introduction to the world of 'le polar' (also classified as 'le roman noir' and under the broader heading 'le roman policier') in Francophone Caribbean literature. Including 14 novels set in Haiti (Gary Victor), Martinique (Raphaël Confiant, Olivier Arrighi and Tony Delsham), Guadeloupe (Ernest Pépin, Georges Bredent, Jacques Vettiers, Michèle Robin-Clerc and the duo Fortuné Chalumeau and Alain Nueil) and French Guiana (Patrice Mouren-Lascaux, Andre Paradis, François Robin), Pierre outlines the vast array of literature from the French-speaking Caribbean that mobilizes the genre of 'le polar' as a means of interrogating the ills of Caribbean society. Throughout the monograph Pierre endeavours to show how writing from the Caribbean builds on the tropes of the existing genre as well as developing its own character as 'Francophone Caribbean' polar literature.

In Chapter One, Pierre offers an overview of the history of the 'polar' genre, examining its Anglophone (mainly British and American) and Francophone (French and Belgian) roots. She expounds on the rule-breaking nature of the genre before exploring how writers of 'la francophonie' – North Africa and the Francophone Caribbean – have been mobilizing this genre. Le polar in the Francophone Caribbean, which already boasts a strong literary canon in other genres, struggles to rise to prominence in the region despite the authors of the corpus using this genre as a way of denouncing the past crimes of enslavement and colonialism.

Chapter Two builds on this theme of historical crimes by examining the violent histories of each of the four territories in question. This chapter will be familiar ground to French Caribbean and Haitian scholars but is an essential intervention to those who are less familiar with this context. As well as historical acts of violence in the Francophone Caribbean, more contemporary issues, such as the question of independence (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyana), illegal immigration (Guyana) and political instability and natural disasters (Haiti), provide ample resources that Caribbean authors of le polar draw from to inform their work. As analysed by Pierre, urban landscapes and the question of race are also major themes that are prominent within the corpus.

In Chapter Three, Pierre's main differentiation between les polars of the Caribbean and those written in the West is the former's departure from 'cartésianisme' (p.107) or systems of rationality. Here, Pierre outlines the importance of the rich religious tapestry of the Caribbean in which through syncretism Christianity of various denominations is often married with Afro-Caribbean religions and spiritualities. The role of Vodou in the corpus is not always the exotic, 'evil' spiritual practice as presented in Western cultures. In the Haitian polar, Vodou is an established religious system that forms a part of the many corrupt religious orders failing its people. The quimboiseur or the seancière, (spiritual medium or fortune-teller, respectively) found in the

texts set in the French overseas departments play a pivotal role in aiding the investigator to solve the crime. Ultimately, the Caribbean polar is characterized by resolutions to crimes that cannot entirely be explained by rational and logical deductions.

Chapter Four breaks down all the different archetypes of le polar and their variations found across the corpus of the monograph (the victims, the suspects, the investigators, the perpetrators and so on). Certain roles seem to have gendered dimensions: the victims are predominantly female and/or children whilst the criminals are predominantly male. Contrastingly, race seems to cut across all categories, running counter to the rigid hierarchies of Caribbean societies that persist from the plantation. Anyone can be a victim, and anyone can be a criminal in the Caribbean polar. This chapter offers a wide array of character types and roles that are present in many of the texts of the corpus.

This monograph also contains an annexe with an interview with Guadeloupean author Gisèle Pineau, whose first foray into le polar, *La couleur de l'agonie* (2021), creates intersections between the violence against women in the present and the violence of enslavement in the past. This interview reinforces the idea that le polar is often used to offer a social commentary on the crimes of the present day as well as commentary on the 'original' crime of enslavement.

The greatest strength of this monograph is the wide geographical breadth of the corpus, spreading across four different Francophone Caribbean islands of Haiti, French Guiana, Martinique and Guadeloupe that are similar enough to be compared but distinct enough to each have their own nuances on le polar. The literary analysis of these texts is very strong, and the commentaries surrounding the novels offer some in-depth analysis of the societies depicted within this literature. The fact that the Caribbean polar debunks the perception of the region as a sunny paradise can be clearly seen through the analysis of the monograph.

The monograph could have at times benefitted from a smaller corpus as it felt that certain texts, such as Victor's *Saison au porc* (2009) and *Soro* (2011) and Delsham's *Chauve qui peut à Schoelcher* (2003) are discussed at length whilst others such as Robin-Clerc's *Au vent des fleurs de cannes* (2000) receive relatively little attention. A slightly smaller corpus that maintained the breadth over the four areas of the Francophone Caribbean would have deepened the literary analysis at times. It would have also allowed for space to explore further the recurring themes of gender – both within the text and in the predominantly male authorship – and violence against the most vulnerable in society even whilst these themes are already discussed by Pierre. The monograph also raises questions of where le polar is situated within the wider body of Francophone Caribbean Literature. It is interesting that some writers, such as Ernest Pépin and Gisèle Pineau, have only written one novel in the genre and it would be an intriguing line of enquiry to look at how le polar dialogues with texts from the wider Francophone Caribbean canon.

Ultimately, *Le Polar de la Caraïbe francophone* gives an extensive overview of the genre in Francophone Caribbean and is useful for Francophone Caribbean studies scholars and students. It is also a useful study for students of French literary studies who may be less familiar with specificities of the contexts of the four areas in the Caribbean. It also provides fertile ground for scholars who wish to delve deeper into questions of gender, violence and how le polar interacts with Francophone Caribbean literature as a whole.

MIRIAM GORDON
UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Francophone African Women Documentary Filmmakers: Beyond Representation. Edited by SUZANNE CROSTA, SADA NIANG, AND ALEXIE TCHEUYAP. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2023. 206 pp. Pb $40. ISBN: 978-0-253-06643-4.

Francophone African Women Documentary Filmmakers: Beyond Representations is a groundbreaking collection that showcases the pivotal contributions of leading voices in African film scholarship. The book offers an in-depth study of the historical, political, cultural, and postcolonial contexts in which African women have produced and featured in documentary films, both on the continent and its diaspora. Building on Beti Ellerson's seminal work, *Sisters of the Screen* (2000), and Lizelle Bischoff and Stefanie Van de Peer's *Women in African Cinema: Beyond the Body Politic* (2020), it contributes to the limited scholarship on women and documentary film, raising crucial questions about the genre and gender, and exploring what it means to film as a woman amidst diverse aesthetic approaches and contexts.

The book's value lies in its epistemological and narrative coherence, effectively documenting the work of African women in documentary film. It serves as a *mise-en-abime,* documenting the practice of documenting 'herstory', as Florence Martin notes in Chapter One within the context of Moroccan women filmmakers (p. 10). It highlights productions by a wide range of filmmakers in the Francophone African region, understanding this category widely and acknowledging its leading role in the history of African cinema. Each analysis is situated within the context of other women's work within the region, offering a comprehensive overview of filmmaking practices from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Morocco, Senegal, and Tunisia, among others. This contributes to establishing intertextual south-to-south relations across film cultures.

The focus on Francophone women's documentary films complicates understandings on genre, building on Bill Nichol's foundational *Representing Reality* (1991). It identifies different modes of production, from observational to self-reflexive, and explores the hybrid relationship between fiction and non-fiction, incorporating autobiography, ethnofiction, docufiction, and self-confession. These films serve as 'a means of communication and consciousness-raising' (p. 59), and as 'tool(s) of resistance and emancipation' (p. 68). They challenge audiences rather than instruct them (p. 4) and they are understood as inclusive filmmaking practices, characterised by their 'artisanal, relatively low-cost' nature (p. 69), with filmmakers often moving between documentary, fiction film and television productions.

Despite the range of aesthetic approaches, the book successfully addresses the question of the female gaze in documentary film. Francophone African women filmmakers are women who dare to make films. Their productions are 'a radical *prise de parole*' (p. 54), resolving historic concerns with unequal power relations in documentary films. Their camera is 'unobtrusive' (p. 57), with a gaze that is 'neither voyeuristic nor detached' (p. 55), establishing 'nonhierarchical relationships with her filmed subjects' (p. 55). Their position is that of the listener, subverting power relations (p. 28) and relying on co-authorship. They are characterised by 'artistic heterogeneity' (p. 5), and the ability to 'flip the expected script' (p. 17), creating films with women audiences in mind. Film becomes a space to dream, reminding us that cinema is a dream machine where filmmakers 'convey their dreams and aspirations for a healthier and better world' (p. 8).

The filmmakers highlighted in the book share missions: documenting everyday life through the lenses of women and examining the relationship between nation-building and the preservation of cultural heritage. The book raises the question: How much do women filmmakers need to

address the topic of women? Themes include women's conditions, female subjectivity, marginalisation of female bodies, women's resilience and determination, madness as a political weapon, death, health, sustainability, prostitution against the backdrop of colonialism, love, and sexual intimacy. Each theme is rigorously contextualized, demonstrating the impossibility of fully grasping documentary film practices without acknowledging political frameworks and colonial institutions that enable, shape or challenge their existence. This is how the book moves beyond representation.

A reading of Chapter One underscores this point. Florence Martin examines Moroccan women's documentaries, shaped by Solana and Getino's manifesto 'Toward a Third Cinema' (1969) and the 'New Arab Cinema Manifesto' (1968), as well as the colonial structure, the Moroccan Cinema Centre (CCM). Pioneering filmmakers Farida Bourquia, Fatema Jebli Ouazzani and Farida Benlyazid show the determination required to become women filmmakers, producing a 'cinema of intervention', 'creating room on-screen' for marginalized communities, and encouraging viewers to fight against social injustice (p. 10).

Chapter Two focuses on Rokhaya Diallo's *Les marches de la liberté/Steps to Liberty* (2013), documenting an anti-racist march from Marseille to Paris in 1983, which had been underdocumented so far. Sheila Petty shows how the film 'opens up a space of activism, protest and dialogue' (p. 46), emphasising the importance of the viewing spaces – such as festivals – for films to encourage social change (p. 34). In Chapter Three, Melissa Thackway analyses pioneering Senegalese filmmaker Safi Faye, and her film *Kaddu Beykat/Letter from my village* (1975), highlighting how women's practices challenge the genre by 'foregrounding women's experiences and voices' (p. 63). Chapter Four continues the focus on Senegal through Khady Sylla's *Une fênetre ouverte/An Open Window* (2005), where El Hadji Moustapha Diop examines the 'visual aesthetics of fragmentation' as Sylla documents her own mental health through her friend Aminta (p. 81), as a form of self-interrogation without necessarily making definitive assertions. (p. 86).

Chapter Five shifts to the Democratic Republic of Congo, examining *Mama Colonel,* by Congolese male filmmaker Dieudou Hamadi, and *This is Congo,* by American male filmmaker Daniel McCabe. Alexie Tcheuyap and Félix Veilleux explore how focusing 'on a single powerful female character' (p. 96) fosters visual empathy and gender-centred analysis of violence. Suzanne Gauch in Chapter Six discusses Moroccan and Tunisian forms of violence impacting women, with directors Leila Kilani Kaouther Ben Hania, adding complexity through a gender perspective. Vulnerability is transformed into agency. Film serves as a form of 'establishing the truth' (p. 114) and as a process of healing (p. 115). Leila Kilani is revisited in Chapter Seven, compared to Cameroonian documentary film *Une affaire de nègres/Black Business,* by Osvalde Lewat (2008). Hervé Tchumkam shows documentaries as spaces for mourning and questioning whose lives matter in totalitarian regimes (p. 139).

Suzanne Crosta in Chapter Eight applies this understanding to films focused on climate change, highlighting African women's leadership 'in building sustainable and healthy communities' (p. 146), to redefine environmentalism in intersectional contexts (p. 153), in 'search for harmony' (p. 155) and once more, healing. It is here that we access the definition of documentary filmmaking as 'the expression of a dream' (p. 156). This resonates, to some extent, with the dream for revolution which comes true in Rama Thiaw's documentary film *The Revolution won't be Televised* (2016) in Sada Niang's Chapter Nine. A film on protest and youth disillusionment, 'grounded in the local film heritage' (p. 164), which Niang acutely compares to Senegalese classics like *Hyenas* (Djibril Diop Mambéty, 1992) or *Guelewaar* (Ousmane Sembène, 1992). The book then closes with

an interview with Gabonese multifaceted artist and filmmaker Nadine Otsobogo, who defines cinema as 'a dream catcher', emphasising the collaborative and generous nature of filmmaking (p. 181). The book is an essential read for students, researchers and anyone passionate about documentary film, women's leading roles in cinema, and African women filmmakers. It not only documents the significant contributions of these filmmakers but also challenges and expands our understanding of the genre

ESTRELLA SENDRA
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies

Contributions on any topic related to Francophone Postcolonial Studies are invited for inclusion in future issues. Authors should submit electronically two copies of their article, 4,000–10,000 words maximum, in English or French to a member of the editorial team. Articles should conform in presentation to the guidelines in the *MHRA Stylebook*, providing references in footnotes, rather than the author-date system. All articles submitted to the *BFPS* will be refereed by two scholars of international reputation, drawn from the advisory and editorial boards. To facilitate the anonymity of the refereeing process, authors are asked that their manuscript (other than the title page) contains no clue as to their identity. Book reviews (between 600 and 1000 words in length) and conference reports (500 words max.) should also be sent to the editorial team.

The deadline for the receipt of articles to be included in the autumn issue is 1 September 2024.

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

SFPS Membership

Membership of the Society includes:

- Subscription to *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* (published by Liverpool University Press), and the biannual electronic *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies*;
- Reduced rates on the purchase of back copies of ASCALF/SFPS publications;
- A complimentary copy of new titles appearing in the SFPS critical studies series;
- Admission to the annual SFPS conference (and other SFPS-sponsored events) at reduced rates;
- Electronic mailings on conferences, study days and publications of interest to SFPS members;
- Access to SFPS grants for conference/colloquia organization is available to SFPS members;
- To join SFPS and renew your membership, please download the membership form, which lists membership rates for the current year: http://www.sfps.ac.uk/.