Metropolitan Mosaics and Melting-Pots
Metropolitan Mosaics and Melting-Pots: Paris and Montreal in Francophone Literatures

Edited by

Pascale De Souza and H. Adlai Murdoch
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We would like to thank Marielle Barrow, a Trinidadian artist and scholar for the painting featured on the cover. Entitled “Transitions,” it refers to a time and space of transition and the process of finding peace through co-existence of disparate entities, differing perspectives and even contradictions.
INTRODUCTION

PARIS AND/OR MONTREAL:
A DOUBLE VISION OF MIGRANT NEGOTIATION

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France: Migrant Marginalization
within a ‘Color-Blind’ Francité

A number of thematic tendrils work in combination to construct the discursive foundation for this volume. The first is migration, a phenomenon whose global scale, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, effectively transformed – from a demographic, ethno cultural, and linguistic point of view – the longstanding features of many of the world’s metropolises and, in so doing, simultaneously impacted those of the migratory points of origin as well. Secondly, focus and specificity are given to this phenomenon by concentrating on the innate and unspoken paradoxes of such migration as they have affected and reshaped what are perhaps the two principal migrant destinations for speakers of French; Montreal, the second-largest metropolis of the francophone world, and Paris, long a center of international migration, especially for migrants coming from former (or current) French colonies. Finally, our analysis incorporates the ways in which migration itself mediates transformations of society and subject in both the originating and the destination cohorts.

Immigration into France increased exponentially from the onset of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Movement from the southern sector of Europe, from countries like Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Spain, as well as from Eastern Europe, grew in response to French economic growth
and the improvements in health and living conditions for the working class. The scale of this population shift was simultaneously tinged with the beginnings of a racialized labor force of France’s colonial “others,” as Tyler Stovall points out:

France … had a history of receiving immigrants unmatched in Europe: in 1911 the census recorded over one million immigrants on French soil. Most of these came from nations bordering France, and these patterns of immigration continued during the war. Over 300,000 Europeans, primarily Spaniards, Italians, and Greeks, worked in France between 1914 and 1918. Yet the real innovation was the importation of “exotic” labor from the French colonies and China (2003: 303).

Later in the 20th century, another substantial wave of immigration occurred between 1920 and 1930, increasing the percentage of immigrants from 3 to 6.6 percent by 1931, by which time France had the highest proportion of immigrants of any western country, with a percentage equaled to a figure of 3 million immigrants or so; remarkably, this was a higher ratio of immigrants than obtained in the United States at the time. Even today, around one third of people in France have a foreign relative.

In the 1930s, a large cohort of about 600,000 Polish workers also arrived, and a comparable number of Spaniards settled there after the Spanish Revolution. The implications of this multifaceted ethno cultural presence for the construction of French identity, particularly within a context of a racialized othering of migrants and their descendants, will be considered shortly.

Given patterns of othering and discrimination, it is not too much of a leap to posit the implied whiteness of the French nation-state. Indeed, it is the very arrival of these groups in increasing numbers, beginning around the turn of the twentieth century, and the preferential treatment given to particular categories of immigrants that laid the foundation for the idea of une blanche France. As Elisa Camiscioli explains, “The predominance of white immigration to France in this period – namely Italians, Belgians, Spaniards, and Poles – has led researchers to assume that race was inconsequential to the rebuilding of the nation. The assimilability of these immigrants, however, was predicated on their membership in what contemporaries defined as ‘la race blanche,’ allowing mass immigration to play a critical role in the consolidation of a white European identity” (55). As a result, groups like the Italians and the Portuguese, the latter of whom constitute the largest immigrant component in France at the time, have arguably wrought the most substantial and far-reaching changes on the national landscape, while the loaded term “immigrant” has been used
across the board to stigmatize a variety of “othered” ethnic minority groups, many of whom – like the Guadelouprians and the Martinicans, but also including people from former French colonies like Senegal, Vietnam, and the Maghreb – are not immigrants at all, and have often been French for generations. The basic binary structure of this oppositional relationship, implicitly segregating a national “us” from an excluded and foreign “them,” is of long standing, finding its origins in this period of European immigration, as Maxim Silverman clearly indicates:

Citizenship has traditionally been linked to nationality in France. The institutional structures distinguishing nationals from foreigners – established largely in the second half of the nineteenth century during intense industrialization, colonial expansion and the construction of French national identity – are still important determinants of inequalities in France today. It was this institutional process that transformed the hazy distinction between nationals and non-nationals into a clear division between them. The demarcation of two separate identities is, at the same time, the construction of inequalities between them (1991: 333, 335).

Here, then, is the key sociocultural structuring force that both over determines and undergirds prevailing notions of French identity. Indeed, as increasing postwar immigration produced major shifts in ethnicity, class and cultural differences, as well as national identity, generating an ever-increasing reduction of migrant difference to the singular signifier “black,” it became inalterably clear that, as Winifred Woodhull puts it, “binarist conceptions of ethnic and national identity ignore both the constitutive role of colonialism in the formation of French national identity during the Enlightenment and the transformation of the French nation-state since World War II” (33). These patterns of discrimination and exclusion have become the *sine qua non* of the ethnic migrant experience, regardless of issues of origin and citizenship. In sum, then, the first half of the twentieth century saw the steady development and promotion of Frenchness as whiteness. In this regard, Tyler Stovall’s assessment is unsparing:

Definitions of Frenchness and citizenship have often been racially coded in the nation’s history … the France of the Third Republic presided over colonies peopled by subjects devoid of the rights enjoyed by men in the metropole. The fact that most of the citizens were white and most of the subjects black and brown meant that the very nature of Frenchness was conditioned by race. This distinction between white citizens and nonwhite subjects lay at the base of French identity as white identity (2004: 54).
The advent of the postcolonial era, with the creation of the four Départements d’Outre-Mer in 1946, the outbreak of the Algerian War in 1954, and the wave of independence in Africa forced the nation to confront the growing presence of racial and minority difference on the French mainland. In essence, race and nationality had long been implicitly conjoined. As Elisa Camiscioli points out, “The construction of the French race occurred in tandem with that of the ‘white race,’ with each project mutually reinforcing the other. This resulted in the consolidation of a supranational European identity and an image of the French race as fundamentally white” (56).

The period traditionally considered as the pinnacle of European colonization was that following the Berlin conference of 1885 which, building on the acquisition of Caribbean possessions in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the French invasion and seizure of Algeria in 1830, witnessed a mad grab of land and minerals, largely on the African continent, which literally carved up territories and divided peoples like the proverbial cake. Following World War II, there was a tectonic shift in ideas and norms regarding colonization, such that decolonization increasingly became the order of the day. The departmentalization law transforming France’s quatre vieilles colonies (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane and Réunion) into an integral part of the French nation was passed in 1946; Britain witnessed the independence of India in 1947, and Ghana and Senegal led the way to independence among their respective British and French colonial counterparts in 1957 and 1960 respectively. Indeed, decolonization rapidly took on the attributes of a trend, as Brysk, Parsons and Sandholtz point out,

> Whereas colonies were once seen as legitimate possessions of the great powers, and part of their mission civilisatrice, decolonization became the international norm in the latter half of the 20th century […] In other words, the identities of Britain, France and Spain are shaped in part by relationships with their ex-colonies, and the familial construction of those ties produces a sense of ongoing solidarity and responsibility (270).

Interestingly, and ironically, even, it was this drive toward independence that would open up the gates for the empire’s (re)turn to the center.

If a key paradox of the post/colonial-independence movement was the creation of populations free to (re)define themselves, an increasing number would do so from within the geopolitical ambit of the former colonizing power. This resulted in the paradoxical extension of the (neo)colonial presence, as Brysk, Parsons and Sandholtz continue,
As decolonization became an active issue in the 1950s, well-developed defenses of French colonial policies became arguments for post-colonial ties. France had sought colonies to claim the vast untapped wealth of Africa, to bolster itself strategically against other Great Powers and to extend the ‘civilizing mission’ and glory of French culture. For many elites on right and left, decolonization did not alter these goals. An entity called ‘Eurafrique’ remained the key to France’s future” (278).

But even as neocolonial exploitation flourished, a series of migratory waves set about transforming the very face of Frenchness in the metropole, the foremost of which originating from the French Caribbean, Algeria and sub-Saharan Africa.

With French Caribbean migration toward the metropole catalyzed in the first instance by the advent of the departmentalization law in 1946, which made citizens of the inhabitants of the quatre vieilles colonies, and in the second by the resulting right of unimpeded entry within a departmental context for these post-colonial populations, ultimately this confluence of events led to the establishment of BUMIDOM (Bureau pour le développement des migrations dans les départements d'outre-mer) whose goal was to furnish a state-organized and -controlled labor pool. These migratory moments resulted both in transgression and transformation. While postwar immigration into France was largely driven by massive labor shortages, as it was in most of the rest of Europe, the paradox of the DOMs is that their populations were not foreigners seeking entry, but nationals moving from the periphery to the center of the nation-state. Specifically for the DOMs, however, the shape of such population movement into France was catalyzed by BUMIDOM. Between its inauguration in April 1963 and its dissolution eighteen years later, BUMIDOM funneled over 160,000 workers from Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, and Réunion onto the French mainland, many of whom sought to escape rising unemployment in their own territories. For example, a comparison between metropolitan France and its Caribbean DOMs shows that in 1982, unemployment stood at 8.4%, in the former versus 12.8% in the latter. By 1970, over 150,000 French West Indians were resident in France, having largely arrived within the space of a single decade. By the time BUMIDOM's work came to an end in 1982, one person in four born in the French West Indies was living in France; by 1990, the total number of people in France claiming French West Indian descent had risen to a remarkable 400,000, of whom 2/3 were born on the Caribbean and 1/3 on the mainland. This metropolitan Caribbean population is now approaching the figure of three-quarters of a million, accounting for over 1% of the total French population. An alternative
perspective shows that there are almost twice as many people of French West Indian descent or birth currently resident on the French mainland than make up the entire population of either Guadeloupe or Martinique, more than 80% of whom reside in or near Paris. Its influence is transforming the landscape of French cultural identity in a myriad of ways, largely through the ever-increasing penetration of West Indian-oriented literature, music, radio stations, and films into mainstream French culture. In addition, this sociocultural phenomenon is also made increasingly visible through the installation of Caribbean communities in specific metropolitan suburbs such as the département of Seine Saint-Denis, or the towns of Bobigny, and Aulnay-sous-Bois. Paradoxically, their racial difference would make targets of these migrant citizens of Caribbean origin, especially among far-right groups since they did not physically and culturally resemble the Français de souche or European migrants, and so were marked implicitly and automatically as foreigners. This conjunction between physical appearance and racial assumption is the seamy underbelly of French racism, as Silverman has noted: 

The major official classification of people in France is in terms of nationality: you are either a national or a foreigner (‘étranger’), there being no official and institutional categories to define people once they have French nationality. . . . This is complicated further. . . . The official distinction between nationals and foreigners is confused by the popular and political blurring of the terms ‘foreigner’ and ‘immigrant’ (‘immerge’). Strictly speaking, not all foreigners are immigrants and, conversely, not all immigrants are foreigners (1992: 2–3).

Yet arbitrary assumptions of origin, place, and otherness would continue to be made not only on the basis of outward appearances but also in the face of the overwhelming presence of immigrant groups on the French mainland, especially those European groups whose numbers, as we have seen, far surpassed those of the displaced Antillean French citizens.

The consequences of France’s 330-year long colonial occupation of Algeria also became increasingly evident on the mainland. The fact that Algerians were French subjects but not French citizens did not hinder their arrival in France in large numbers after the end of World War I to fill a pressing labor shortage, reaching the 100,000 mark in 1924. Meanwhile, French and European settlers, known as pieds noirs (presumably because they wore black boots to work in the fields), who had been given land steadfastly blocked political reforms that would have given native Algerians a voice in government. In the wake of a similar, if qualitatively more extreme situation after 1945, political reforms introduced under the
Statute of Algeria (1947) granted Algerian men full citizenship in mainland France, giving rise to large-scale population transfers between Algeria and France. At the same time, longstanding patterns of discrimination towards ethnic Algerians in Algeria, including, or especially, those who wanted to leave for France, continued unabated, as Todd Shepard points out,

Official documents and official statements continued to define all people from Algeria as French citizens – until the so-called exodus … In the midst of the exodus the French government abandoned the legally accurate affirmation that all people from Algeria were equally French. Through a series of legal and bureaucratic shifts, officials denied almost all “Arabs,” “Berbers,” or “Muslims” from Algeria the right to keep their existing French citizenship (95-6).

The end result of this blatant ethno cultural discrimination meant that the number of Algerians in France rose under the terms of the Evian Accord settling Algerian independence in 1962, going from 300,000 Algerians around 1956 to over 500,000 Algerian nationals by 1965. At the same time, having (re)classified ethnic Algerians as “refugees,” the French government built on the fiction by inscribing them as non-French in official reports, negating their citizenship and erasing unpalatable facts of colonial history. In his Study of the Problems Posed by the Repatriation of Refugees from Algeria, Professor Robert de Vernejoul wrote that “these non-French Muslims … are not repatriates in the true sense of the term … they are refugees.” Meanwhile, the hundreds of thousands of European settlers who had left Algeria in 1962-3 received priority treatment with regard to public housing, while Algerian immigrants were housed in shanty-towns, the last of which were only demolished in 1977. By the late 1970s, many Algerians and their families had been moved to public housing estates and run-down banlieues. This overall situation was exacerbated by the fact that up to 100,000 Algerians who had served in the French armed forces (harkis) arrived in France in 1962, fearing massacre in Algeria by nationalists. It is here, then, that we can arguably locate the birth of the contemporary tensions that continue to separate France from its Muslim minority.

The arc of sub-Saharan African immigration to France paints a somewhat different picture, falling within the ambit of a transnational

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black experience within the metropole. Interestingly, the overall framework traced by this experience sets up a core paradox at the heart of the black experience in France. The range of issues that this phenomenon touches on is indeed remarkable, as Dominic Thomas suggests:

Of course, to talk about the question of blackness in France is to consider a plethora of influences, including the African American presence, the negritude movement, important cultural figures such as Senghor, Césaire, Léon-Gontran Damas, and Frantz Fanon, the emergence of African student organizations and unions, France’s connection with its Overseas Departments and Territories, migrant and clandestine workers, the *sapeurs*, and contemporary African writers … Paris played a defining role in the elaboration of the “African experience,” in the formulation and reformulation of a global blackness (10).

The first important influx dates back to World War I, when African immigrants came as soldiers to defend the *mère-patrie* or to fulfill quotas for substitute labor. On the one hand, France’s incorporation of African cohorts into its military forces conformed almost exactly to pre-existing French colonial stereotypes of savagery and moral weakness, furthering the notion that the predisposition of such troops to unbridled bloodletting would substantially advance the war effort, as Stovall makes clear:

The French viewed Africans as completely uncivilized, violent cannibals prone to animal-like behavior. During the war this stereotype translated into a belief that Africans would make good soldiers because of their supposed predilection for bloodletting. In particular, African soldiers in wartime France were often associated with decapitation, the belief being that they would go into berserker fits on the battlefield, using their sabres to chop off enemy heads with savage glee … If images of savagery proved a positive attribute for French colonial soldiers during World War I, moral weakness was a distinctly negative one for French colonial labor. The laziness of colonial subjects is a constant theme of French exoticist literature, so much so that a central mission of empire was seen to be civilizing the natives by teaching them the values of hard work. Sexual abandon, or lust in the tropics, complemented the image of the indolent colonial subject (2003: 299-300).

As this lengthy quote makes clear, the distinct patterns and attitudes that undergirded mediated and enabled colonial hierarchies of racial and cultural difference remained firmly in place even as the nation imported large numbers of colonized men for its armed forces; Stovall points out that “the French government began conscripting African soldiers in 1912. Roughly 200,000 colonial soldiers served in France during the Great War”
In addition, African Americans began arriving in France in 1917 as part and parcel of the US war effort, and a complex moment of historical significance began to take shape. The American military created two combat divisions for African Americans, but the vast majority of the 200,000 black soldiers sent to Europe with the American Expeditionary Forces were assigned to service units, reflecting a belief that black men were more suited for manual labor than combat duty. Fraternization with the French gave rise to interracial friendships. African American bands often introduced blues and jazz rhythms previously unknown to French audiences, and many black GIs decided to stay in France after the end of hostilities. This was arguably the moment when black culture was born in Paris, and African American musicians, artists, and writers of the Harlem Renaissance found a warm welcome in a growing community largely centered in Montmartre. Yet this positive reception was in stark contrast, to say the least, to France’s ongoing domination and exploitation of its colonized black populations in Africa and the Caribbean, as Professor Adlai Murdoch concluded in “Aimé Césaire, the Colonial Exhibition, and the Modernity of the Black Atlantic”, “perceptions of race and alterity marked the limits of a French praxis of assimilation; assumptions of equality here encountered the unbreachable boundary of colonial racism” (59). At the same time, as Stovall insists, simultaneous postwar efforts to repatriate colonial forces of color while importing workers from other European countries to fill a gaping labor shortage leads to the inescapable conclusion that such efforts were “part of a larger process that racialized French working class identity, and that of France as a whole, as white. In attempting to reverse one effect of the Great War by sending these colonials home, this process of expulsion did not restore prewar certainties but rather created a new vision of France, one constructed along subtle but real lines of racial domination and exclusion” (2004: 53). Put another way, the elites like Césaire and Senghor who were occasionally admitted to the top tiers of the tertiary system of education in the metropole were the exception that proved the rule. As Stovall explains, “The intense French interest in African American culture during much of the twentieth century derived from contradictory perspectives on both blackness and America. From primitivism in the 1920s to anti-Americanism after World War II, African Americans served as a powerful barometer of how the French viewed the world and, by extension, themselves” (1996: xiv-xv).

While various measures were tried to limit or regulate the African influx to France, starting in the 1930’s and again after World War II, by the 1960’s there was a visible and growing presence of Black Africans in Paris and some of its suburbs, particularly Belleville. Embodying a vibrant
and multicultural facet of Paris, Belleville is “an astonishing blend of architecture, of social strata, and of race; estimates of the number of different cultures represented within its boundaries vary between forty and eighty,” (Stott, 355). But two new variables increased and transformed the migratory flows. The first was the policy of family reunion, introduced by Jacques Chirac when he was Prime Minister in 1975-1976, after guest-worker programs were officially ended. A second factor was amnesty, granted to 131,000 illegal immigrants in 1981-1982. France became a magnet, attracting a million immigrants in the next five years. In sum, we can reasonably estimate that there are between 2.3 and 3 million sub-Saharan Africans (including children) in France today.

This radical transformation of French society takes place within an overarching sociocultural framework in France that is perceived as increasingly hostile to immigrants in general, and to immigrants of color in particular. Given the inescapable presence of the populations of color that peopled its former colonies, the immediacy of the returning empire’s otherness proved to be overwhelming. Perhaps the primary result here was the 1993 “Pasqua law” named for French interior minister Charles Pasqua, who sponsored it. This piece of legislation sought to stem the flow of migrants by increasing the waiting period for family reunification from one to two years and by denying residency permits to foreign spouses who had been in the country illegally prior to marrying. More specifically, the law had two iterations; the first Pasqua law, passed in 1986, made it easier to expel foreigners and restricted the process of naturalization by marriage. The second Pasqua law (July 22 1993, revised August 24 1993) extended to two years the waiting period for a foreign spouse to gain French nationality by marry ing a French citizen. Further, children of foreign nationals born in France were no longer automatically entitled to French citizenship; they were now required to express the desire to acquire French nationality. Similar restrictions would now also apply to those children born in France to French nationals who were themselves born in former French territories. Further tightening occurred through the Debré law of 1997, a bill aimed at restricting the right of immigrants to stay in France regardless of their prior length of residence. Yet, family reunification continues to account for nearly 65 percent of immigration to France nowadays. But such actions and attitudes made it increasingly clear that the category of Frenchness – and the terms and conditions defining it and allowing subjects to qualify for it – was rapidly and inexorably narrowing in the face of what seemed like increasing and inexorable change.

This ongoing immigration debate, fueled by successive and well-publicized crises centering on the growing number of unauthorized
migrants, or *sans-papiers* – now estimated to be between 200,000 and 400,000, and perhaps highlighted by the group that took refuge for an extended period in the Saint-Bernard church (1996-1997) to avoid deportation – gave rise to yet another new immigration and integration law, adopted on July 25, 2006. This law sought to overhaul France's immigration system by giving the government new powers to encourage high-skilled migration, fight illegal migration more effectively, and restrict family immigration. Taking effect in 2007, one of its key results was a drastic rise in the number of people deported for not having the required documents -32,900 by the end of 2011, and 36,800 by the end of 2012, inciting protests from tens of thousands of French citizens and immigrant rights organizations. Both these organizations and several African leaders, particularly those of the countries to which the *sans-papiers* are deported, have criticized the law's limits on family reunification and its increased requirements for giving legal status to illegally resident immigrants.

The inescapable conclusion here appears to be that racism in France – an avowedly and proudly secular nation that claims not to have any minorities since all citizens are equally French – is both pervasive and ongoing. Trica Danielle Keaton makes the point well:

> At the same level, racism and xenophobia are long-standing social realities in France, with “scientific” racism, legitimizing chattel slavery and colonization, as the most obvious example. Since 1989, these lived experiences have been documented by the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH, Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme). This advisory committee is charged with providing policy analysis to the prime minister in keeping with existing French laws and United Nations human rights resolutions against racial discrimination. Drawing from police reports and public opinion polls, the CNCDH found that France has experienced a “massive” increase in “racial threats” and violence against persons identified as “Arab-Muslims,” “Jews,” “blacks,” and immigrants, or those perceived as such, most notably between 2001 and 2002, the highest in 10 years (2005: 414-15).

In sum, then, the state of contemporary migrant France is a complex one, characterized, in Tshimanga, Gondola, and Bloom’s words, by “tensions between national identity, on the one hand, and infranational and transnational belonging, on the other … point[ing] to the emergence of postcolonial cultural patterns in France in which minority groups … are rearranging and rescripting narratives that structure the notion of Frenchness” (9). One way to view the principles and practices outlined here is to recall that France is shaped by a secular ideal that refuses to recognize ethnic and religious differences in the public domain. Yet, at the
same time, it may be argued that this implicit splitting of the country along lines of ethnically-driven migrant difference has clearly visible colonial origins that are now shifting the common ground of national subjectivity. As Keaton reminds us, “this emerging national identity arising from the housing projects of Paris is the ever-changing product of a diverse population whose historical presence within the metropole continues to threaten the fabled common culture indicative of French nation-space” (1999: 51) Despite the longstanding claim that the nation solved, and resolved its incipient postcolonial tensions with the act of departmentalization of 1946, the welcome publication of such recent works as *La France noire* and *La Fracture coloniale*, the release of documentary films like *Noirs de France* and *Ici on noie les Algériens*, and the passage of the Loi Taubira, on May 10, 2001, recognizing slavery and the slave trade as crimes against humanity, an official acknowledgement that new forms of *communautarisme* reflect current French society is still pending. Such *communautarisme* will not necessarily lead to a growing set of fragmented identities and allegiances, but rather might successfully inscribe an alternative vision of *francité*, whereby singular perceptions and definitions of the differential cultural underpinnings of French identity and French citizenship can be recognized and valorized.

The primary part which Paris continues to play in this potential construction of *communautarisme* cannot be underestimated. Both its centrifugal and centripetal roles must however be taken into consideration. The City of Lights has indeed welcomed cultural and political elites into a fruitful exchange which gave birth to such movements as negritude, inspired Glissant’s construction of identity, and even contributed to the advent of *créolité*. The seminal event of the *créolité* movement itself can indeed be traced back to a presentation given in the Parisian suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis, by its proponents, on 22 May 1988 during the Festival Caraïbe. Paris has also attracted economic migrants, from metropolitan regions such as Brittany, as well as BUMIDOM-sponsored migrants coming to fill positions in the private sector but also in multiple administrations, as well as Africans and Asians seeking escape from economic and political woes. Its role in this regard differs markedly from a crucible of identity; instead, Paris emerges as the vilified site of a failed migration in such fiction as Edmino and Mbumbo’s comic-book *Malamine, un Africain à Paris* or Wilfried N’Sondé’s novels exploring the tensions among and between migrant communities living in the *banlieues*.

As some of the essays featured in this publication underline, Paris’ centrifugal role cannot be construed only in terms of international migration but must take into consideration migrants’ interaction with other
parts of metropolitan France as well. In this regard, the capital city can be construed as both centrifugal and centripetal as some migrants identify stronger cultural ties with their French province than with the capital city as Nina Bouraoui’s main protagonists in *Garçon Manqué*. Likewise, the advent of deportations and voluntary returns to the native land has opened new perspectives onto Paris seen from the native land but by former migrants. They provide a new vision of the city, falsely magnified as the City of Lights with its museums and monuments as in *Verre Cassé* by Alain Mabanckou or emerging as one ingredient among many, including life in the province and overseas, contributing to a global path to identity as Fabienne Kanor underlines in her interview. A brief overview of the five essays pertaining to Paris highlights the multiple roles played by Paris as a francophone hub.

In “Ile de France: The Construction of an Insular City in the Work of Édouard Glissant,” Christina Kulberg examines Glissant’s vision of his first encounter with Paris. On the one hand, Paris incarnates an entire culture, reflecting values and mores transmitted via Glissant’s colonial education. On the other hand, it emerges as an insular seat of power, projecting French ways of knowing, seeing, and understanding which annihilate any alternative discourse of identity. This may explain why Glissant experiences Paris first and foremost as a homogeneous whole and reminds oblivious to foreign presence and influence. Its streets are deserted, its squares melancholic, its light simultaneously attracting and diffracting. Reduced to a “kind of open insularity” (Dash 2003, 102), Glissant’s Paris is neither melting-pot nor mosaic. It does not welcome nor reject him, but rather challenges him to explore his own identity and ultimately elaborates his own Caribbean discourse.

Glissant’s approach to urban space as an almost utopian crucible contrasts greatly with several other authors’ vision of Paris as a lure for hapless migrants seeking new forms of empowerment. As Véronique Bragard examines in “Parisian Alternative Cartographies: Meandering the Ambivalent Banlieue in Wilfried N’Sondé’s Fiction”, Wilfried N’Sondé depicts characters who are never able to appropriate the famed French metropolis, through their meanderings along the Seine. They remain trapped into the depths of banlieues torn by daily violence, psychological suffering and social marginalization. His three novels examine how to handle life in the borderlands of a society which attracts migrants all the better to diffract them away from the center. Yet, these borderlands also provide nooks and crannies where migrants can meet friends, experience brotherhood, recall their childhood and explore new ways of being. The question remains whether they can ultimately escape geography and
destiny to overcome disillusion through love. N’Sondé’s depiction of Paris and its banlieue is not however limited to this duel vision, as both the center and the banlieue encompass comfortable dwellings and vandalized public spaces. Migrants thus need to negotiate new spaces which can become both havens enabling new encounters and way stations leading towards perdition. In so doing, they contribute to a constant redefinition of borders.

In “A Reluctant Migrant in Paris: Malamine, un Africain à Paris” Binita Mehta explores similar issues as seen through a different medium. Malamine, a comic book which has garnered critical recognition, features an African economist with a doctorate from the Sorbonne. Far from being interested in exploring migrant identities as torn between an African heritage and a Parisian locale, Edmino aims to develop a new kind of literature, once which decenters both African and French literary heritage. Melamine’s wandering to various micro-locations in Paris leads him to meet African migrants from all walks of life, including successful black urban professionals. Likewise, Paris is not only characterized by its iconic monuments and its immigrant neighborhood but emerges as a maze of interiors, streets scenes, and bars that could be found in any large metropolis. Through the narrative, we witness a slow transformation in Melamine’s character as he wavers between a potential return to a country which victimizes his own ethnic group and integration in a host society where he fears retribution for expressing any criticism? Ultimately, his personal quest has less to do with finding inscription in a new world than with exploring ways and means to live in any given society as a member of a repressed minority.

The following essay follows in Malamine’s footsteps as the main protagonist returns home only to discover that he is trapped into a cyclical retelling of his experience in Paris. In “‘France and Africa gone West’: Intertextuality and the Interrogation of Francophonie in Alain Mabanckou’s writings”, Winifred Woodhull examines how the Congolese writer Alain Mabanckou satirizes societies, both past and present. The novel Broken Glass/Verre Cassé (2005), like much of his writing, challenges lofty ideas that have long seemed unassailable, skewering religious, military, and political leaders and poking fun at renowned writers and thinkers. Once back in Congo at a dive bar called Credit Gone West, Printer, the destitute Congolese migrant tells his story over and over to one and all, even though he considers the African customers at the bar to be beneath him. His stories about Paris yet remain incomprehensible to other patrons. His compulsive retelling of his experience in Paris, his selection of Paris-Match as a source of truths about the City of Light, and his unshakable
belief in its superiority to all things African reflect his inability to negotiate a new (return) migrant identity. *Broken Glass* wreaks havoc with the very notion of francophonie, as African, Caribbean, and French texts collide into a heady spiral, constantly displacing each other so that none ever remains near the center nor on the periphery. By mixing multiple means of expression such as art, journalism, and literature, Mabanckou also challenges borders between fiction and non-fiction, enticing us to explore new frontiers.

While Paris and its *banlieues* have been the stage of many identity quests in francophone fiction and poetry, several migrant authors have also reflected upon the interplay between Paris and the provinces in their novels. Brittany and Paris thus both feature prominently in Franco-Algerian novelist Nina Bouraoui’s exploration of migrant female identity. In “Nina Bouraoui’s detoured journey to the Métropole: Paris by way of Brittany”, Lydie Moudileno explores the radical transformation of the displaced and/or diasporic subject, namely Nina torn between an Algerian father and a Breton mother. Brittany has long played a major part in emigration trends, both to Paris and to New France. In *Garçon Manqué*, Bouraoui however explores it as a postcolonial destination of singular Frenchness. The latter both complicates the identity quest for the main mixed race protagonist and provides her with a steadier anchoring into French values and culture. As her birth place, Rennes exerts a primeval pull on Nina and yet, the vacation weeks she spends with the maternal family emerge as painful moments confronting her with rituals of inclusion and exclusion. Ultimately, while Nina’s migration to Paris aligns her with countless diasporic Breton girls, it also opens opportunities to explore new approaches to the francophone literary quest along a Paris/Province axis.

The final essay focusing on Paris is an interview of Martinican journalist and novelist Fabienne Kanor. She shares with Nina Bouraoui the experience of being born in a provincial town (Orleans). Both her parents were however from Martinique. While Orleans as such hardly features in her work as a journalist and writer of fiction, it permeates all her work as she focuses on identity issues facing migrants and in particular the role of West Africa, Martinique and metropolitan France in her personal itinerary and her protagonists’ quest for identity. In her interview, she examines how her childhood experience growing up in a franco-French white city has shaped her subsequent feeling of being constantly in flight, departing for other shores. Having lived in Senegal, Benin, Martinique, and metropolitan France, she now shares her time between Africa, the Caribbean and Europe. Eschewing both the vision of Paris as a melting-pot
and Glissant’s concept of rhizome, she identifies more with Mabanckou’s vision of Paris as a myriad of small migrant communities from North and sub-Saharan which hardly mingle with each other, let alone with local Parisians. In her view, the Caribbean experience of migration to the metropolis differs insofar as rifts emerge more along generational lines. While the first generation hardly interacted with its new milieu, second or third generation migrants are more fully integrated, forging a new migratory trajectory. Kanor illustrates the emergence of a new hybrid identity as she explores migrant communities in various European hotspots of illegal migration such as Melilla and Lampedusa and African cities such as Saint-Louis du Senegal. She characterizes her next novel as an odyssey, joining in this regard the likes of Alain Mabanckou in *Black Bazar* or Edem Awumey in *Les Pieds Sales*. Such authors ultimately challenge post-colonial approaches to Paris, living in a transient world where borders between fiction and non-fiction, provinces and main city, countries, and even continents dissolve, opening new doors into francophone discourses of identity.

**Montreal: Migrant Isolation and Canadian Cosmopolitanism**

While it shares with Paris a common heritage as a centrifugal center attracting migrants from overseas as well as more recently from Quebecan villages and Acadie, Montreal presents quite a different picture from that of Paris. Long the principal francophone city in North America, its pre-eminence as a center of immigration and culture is unsurpassed. Scooter Pegram makes the point well:

> The city of Montréal is the second most important French-speaking municipality in the world (after Paris) and is Québec's largest and most important urban area. Montréal plays a major role in the development of Québec; the sole area of North America where French is spoken as the principal language. That said, Montréal is a city that was constructed and colonized by the British, and to this very day it has a substantial English-speaking minority population. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, Montréal is a multicultural, cosmopolitan metropolis and an international city (4).

Is Canada cosmopolitan? In his recent book, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, Kwame Anthony Appiah proposes a moralistic framework that embodies two principal values: “universal concern” for all humanity beyond traditional boundaries of family and nation, and a
“respect for legitimate difference” (xv). Seen in these terms, Appiah's cosmopolitanism arguably seeks to combine a universalist ethic with a nuanced acknowledgement of difference. Given the valorization of immigration, diversity and tolerance within the Canadian national discourse, it is this cosmopolitan, international character undergirding the city of Montreal that places it on a par with Paris as a hub of migration and its corollaries of multiculturalism. But first, it behooves us to take a broader look at Canada itself, and at the migrant context and culture that have shaped it as a nation.

Ineluctably and irrefutably, Canada is a country structured and peopled by its immigrant population. Although, on the face of it, this fact appears to align Canada demographically and socioculturally with its smaller but more prominent neighbor to the south, Canadians proudly assert their completely separate and different approach to immigration as one of the key factors that makes them distinct from the United States and the tensions around immigration policy that have long helped to define the latter. In a recent report, Irene Bloemraad asserts that:

Despite having a much greater proportion of immigrants in its population than other Western countries, Canada is far more open to, and optimistic about, immigration than its counterparts in Europe and the United States. According to a 2010 survey, about two-thirds of Canadians feel that immigration is a key positive feature of their country. Indeed, those Canadians who most strongly identify themselves as patriotic are also the most supportive of immigration and multiculturalism (1).

This positive impression held by the majority of Canadians regarding the role immigration plays in Canadian national identity is borne out by the statistics; as a recent New York Times report put it, “Few nations take more immigrants per capita, and perhaps none with less fuss.” (DeParle) Indeed, it might reasonably be claimed that immigration, along with its corollaries of demography and culture, play a key role in the construction of Canadian national identity. As Bloemraad continues, “Canada has reinvented its national identity away from that of a British colony or a shadow of the United States to one that embraces immigration, diversity, and tolerance” (1). From this perspective, the comparisons become even more interesting when Canadian attitudes are paired with those prevailing in Britain and France, as Bloemraad shows:

Compared to the citizens of other developed immigrant-receiving countries, Canadians are by far the most open to and optimistic about immigration. In one comparative poll, only 27 percent of those surveyed in Canada agreed that immigration represented more of a problem than an
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opportunity. In the country that came closest to Canadian opinion, France, the perception of immigration as a problem was significantly higher, at 42 percent. The most widespread objections came from the United Kingdom, where 65 percent of people surveyed saw immigration as more of a problem than an opportunity … Among transatlantic countries surveyed in 2010, Canada had by far the highest percentage of foreign-born residents, about 20 percent of the population; by comparison, immigrants were only 11 percent of the population in the United Kingdom … the foreign born mak[e] up a far greater proportion of the population in Canada than in countries such as the United States, France, Germany, and Italy (2).

Clearly, then, Canadians by and large regard immigration in a positive light; it is also noteworthy that, in contrast to many migration-oriented nations, the relatively high proportion of foreign-born residents in the national population is not perceived as a problem. The scale of this migrant presence is at the core of Canada’s vision of itself as a tolerant, diverse, multicultural country. This is borne out in part by the fact that, again in stark contrast to several other migration-centered host nations, violence related to political or ethno cultural tensions around migration has been notably absent in Canada. As Bloemraad shows, “Riots over immigration and minority issues have occurred in France, the United Kingdom, and Australia over the past decade, but not in Canada. In fact, no riots or incidents of street violence have broken out over diversity issues since the liberalization of immigration laws in the 1960s ushered in massive non-European migration” (6). Be that as it may, however, the situation around migration in Canada is by no means idyllic. Indeed, when it comes to its ‘visible’ minority migrants, or migrants of color, migration-oriented tensions begin to tick inexorably upward in Canada, to the point where geography appears to demarcate a distinction without a difference.

If Quebec is the francophone center of Canada, Montreal arguably plays a similar role for Quebec. At the time of the Canadian census of 2006, the city of Montreal proper had 1.6 million inhabitants, rising to 3.9 million in the Greater Montreal Area. It is estimated that 26% of the population of Montreal, and 16.5% of that of Greater Montreal, belong to a visible minority group. Of this larger class of non-whites, Blacks are the largest component, with Montreal having the 2nd highest number of Blacks in Canada after Toronto. Many, if not most, of these Black migrants are of Haitian origin. As Haitians fled the persecutions of ‘Papa Doc’ Duvalier and his feared Tonton Macoutes, Montreal increasingly became a hub of refuge and (re)settlement for this community, despite the forbidding weather and (at least in part) because of the city’s francophone focus.
Montreal is the largest French-speaking city in Canada, in North America as a whole, but also the second-largest French-speaking city in the world after Paris. The 2006 census revealed that 66.5% of its people spoke French as a first language, while 1.3% were primarily Haitian Creole speakers. Other languages spoken in this truly cosmopolitan city include among others Chinese, Greek, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Tagalog, Polish, and Armenian. While about 90% of Haiti’s population is exclusively Creole-speaking, some claim that the francophone focus of the Montreal agglomeration works to offset this potential exclusionary pattern. Pegram thus argues that “Québec is a Francophone society into which Créole speaking Haitians can integrate with relative ease. Concerning the latter reason, because French is the official language of Haiti and is the primary vernacular used by the Haitian élite, it has long been considered as a useful device in order to achieve upward mobility among all Haitians, despite an overall lack of comprehension in French by the vast majority of the population” (3). In the event, as migrants from the Haitian elite were increasingly outnumbered by immigrants from the working and peasant classes, the notion that French represented a linguistic panacea for this group, mediating and easing assimilation into the metropolitan Montreal mainstream, would be progressively undermined by an all too familiar set of sociocultural attitudes and prejudices. Be that as it may, Haitian Creole is the sixth most spoken language in Montreal and the seventh most spoken language in the province of Quebec, helping to produce a situation where the visible and audible social, cultural, performative, and political presence of Haitians in Montreal is unmatched in any other North American city. Montreal’s Haitian population of approximately 100,000 gives it pride of place among the North American Haitian diaspora, as Pegram goes on to argue:

Concerning demographics, the Montréal region serves as the magnet and principal destination in Canada for all arrivals from Haiti. More than 95% of all Haitians in Canada live in Québec, with over 90% of them residing in the Montréal metropolitan area ... Haitians are also extremely visible in Québécois culture: working as journalists and broadcasters in the media, contributing to the arts, as well as contributing to pop culture via the entertainment industry. It is important to note that this type of visibility does not exist in other areas of the North American Haitian Diaspora. For example, there are few, if any Haitians who have achieved similar success in the United States; despite the fact that the New York City area alone has a Haitian population estimated to be over 500,000 people (aside, perhaps, from Wyclef Jean and a few other exceptions) (3).
But despite, or perhaps because of this overwhelming Haitian presence, along with that of other communities of color, Quebec appears to be the place where Canadian multiculturalism faces the greatest challenges. Indeed, it might be claimed that integration is seen to be preferable over diversity, as Bloemraad claims, “It is in Quebec that we see the greatest skepticism toward diversity and multiculturalism policies and a greater preference that immigrants assimilate into the dominant Francophone culture.” (10) At the same time, these communities of color have clearly been shown to be victims of discrimination in a number of areas, particularly by comparison with white Canadians; Bloemraad argues convincingly that there is:

evidence of unequal economic outcomes for ‘visible minorities” compared to those of European origins. Statistical analyses of Canadian census data over the past three decades show that visible minorities tend to earn less than Canadians who are not visible minorities, even after controlling for education, age, and similar determinants of economic outcomes, and even among those born in Canada. Audit studies of job hunting, in which identical résumés are submitted for the same job, but where researchers vary the ethnic origins of candidates’ names and place of birth, find that job applicants with ‘Anglo’ names have an advantage despite identical credentials (10).

What is remarkable about this last phenomenon is that it mirrors almost exactly studies carried out among France’s minority populations of color; in both France and Quebec, similar outcomes have shown preferences in the categories of both jobs and housing for a Jean Dupont or Philippe Tremblay, Anne Durand or Marie Gagnon over someone named Ousmane, Mohammed, or Fatima. This pervasive phenomenon of name-based discrimination seems to apply across the board to minority groups of whatever stripe, pointing to the prejudicial conditions encountered by Haitian migrants to Quebec despite their potential familiarity with and fluency in French.

However, Haitian migrants find themselves subject to other forms of discrimination as well. As it turns out, language is also one of these areas of tension, as Pegram points out,

Due to the fact that French-speaking Québec finds itself in a minority position in English-speaking North America, immigrant youth in Québec encounter much pressure to abandon their cultural heritage and assimilate into the majority Francophone culture … immigrants are expected to assimilate into the fabric of majority society. Pressure to shed one's heritage language (in favour of French) places immigrants in a subordinate
position in terms of their capacity and social standing … young Haitians remain marginalized by Québec society (5-6).

These patterns of discrimination and exclusion become much more marked when they are applied to Haitians as a group within the sociocultural framework of Quebec. When Haitians are asked to identify themselves within a context of belonging, the distinctions become clear, as Pegram shows, “Haitians are a visible minority within the Québec mosaic … To the question ‘how do you identify yourself,’ … a strong majority of Haitian youth (91%) regardless of birthplace identify themselves either as ‘Haitian only’ or ‘Haitian first, Québécois second’ … a slight majority of Québec-born Haitians (54%) identify themselves as being ‘Haitian only.’ A slight minority of Haitian-born respondents (44%) share the same identification (7).” This overwhelming sense of cultural memory, identification with their land and culture of origin extends across first- and second-generation migrants and, indeed, often trumps the geographic and political realities of Canadian birth. The reasons for this insistent identification with Haiti are no doubt legion, but some part of it can be laid at the door of an ongoing exposure to a range of Canadian discrimination practices. This can take a variety of forms; from police who automatically associate Blacks with crime, to preconceived notions of Haitians (even the Canadian-born ones) as delinquents and troublemakers because of an internalization of Haitian stereotypes, to tensions regarding education and the job market. In any event, as Pegram’s inescapable conclusion shows, “Haitian youth in Montréal do not distance themselves from their ethno cultural origin, regardless of their place of birth or total overall years spent in Québec” (7-8). In a certain way, it can in fact be claimed that there is a strong correlation between perceived racism on the one hand, or a sense of being part of a pervasively dominated group, and identity construction and the integration strategies of young Haitians on the other. Put another way, reverting to the locus and culture of origin can operate as a defense strategy when minority subjects are made to deal with the ongoing realities of race-based exclusion. It is the distance between this sense of disenfranchisement and the paradoxes of legal but not social belonging that ultimately undergirds this transnational phenomenon of Haitianness, As Pegram concludes, “Regardless of how young Haitians identify themselves (males or females), the majority feel that they are not included as being ‘Québécois’ or considered as equal partners by the majority culture regardless of their good faith” (11). If, however, “many young Haitians will conclude that issues relating to racism and discrimination are keeping them from reaching the pinnacle of Québec society” (13), then it is perhaps by making particular modes of subjectivity and identity possible
for Haiti’s Canadian cohort, by reaching some modicum of acceptance between Quebec’s desire for Francophone integration at the provincial level, and a recognition of the province’s Haitian community beyond the boundaries of the visibility of racial difference, that the patterns of belonging outlined here will broach new possibilities.

Even more so than Paris, Montreal emerges as a central locus of migration within the francophone world. Any Francophone approach of its centrifugal role must include an examination of its role in terms of interaction with other parts of Quebec and Acadie as well as due consideration to the impact of the Haitian diaspora on reshaping the city. As Ireland and Proulx, Choquet and De Souza underline, migrants of various age, gender and educational background contribute to the emergence of Montreal as a vibrant multicultural metropolis but also reflect some failed trajectories leading back to a lost native land. Any exploration of the city must also take into consideration its centripetal impact as migrants return home and provide a new vision of their not-so-native land. This particular aspect of migration is given due focus in several of the contributions, culminating in a paper offering a complex new vision by Dany Laferrière, a Haitian/Quebecan/American author who ultimately joins Fabienne Kanor in her global vagrancy as a new crucible of identity.

In “Migration and Identity in Haitian Québécois Literature”, Susan Ireland and Patrice Proulx examine how Haitian Quebecan writers “explore the complex relationships between immigration, place, and identity” (Ireland and Proulx) in their depiction of the evolving identity of Montreal. After providing a short overview of contributions by authors such as Dany Laferrière and Marie-Célie Agnant, they focus on the representations of cartography and migration in Emile Ollivier’s posthumous novel *La brûlerie* and in particular his depiction of displaced protagonists as “êtres de frontière” (*La brûlerie* 182). Ollivier’s corpus reflects his evolving perception of Montreal from a destination of forced exile to a celebrated home. In *Les urnes scellées*, the professional shift of the main protagonist from archeology to cartography marks a turning point in Ollivier’s representation of Montreal as a locale where migrants can eshew the past and turn towards mapping a new future for themselves and their new home. A paradox then emerges as through becoming citizens of their own Montreal neighborhood, they ultimately find ways to integrate the Haitian network into “celui, infini et aléatoire, de l’intertextualité sans frontières” (*La brûlerie* 210). Their quest highlights the possibility of finding multiple forms of belonging for migrants in urban centers throughout the world.