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Invisible Exodus: The Cultural Effacement of Antillean Migration

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In the closing piece of the 1995 essay collection *Penser la créolité* [*Thinking Creoleness*], the Guadeloupean novelist Maryse Condé, also one of the volume's editors, offers her thoughts on the revival of Creole language and culture advocated by the Martinican writers Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphael Confiant and the linguist Jean Bernabé in their 1989 manifesto, *Éloge de la créolité* [*In Praise of Creoleness*]. In her commentary Condé articulates in measured terms her view that, as a cultural movement, *créolité* remains trapped in an outdated opposition between France and the Caribbean, metropolitan center and tropical margin.[1] Among the main points that she makes in this regard is that although since the 1960s there has been mass migration from the *départements d'outre-mer* (overseas departments, or DOM) of the French Caribbean to metropolitan France, "*la littérature de notre fin de vingtième siècle ne tient aucun compte de ces bouleversements, de ces mutations et de ces redéfinitions d'identité* [our late twentieth-century literature takes no account of these ruptures, these mutations, these redefinitions of identity]" (Condé, "Chercher" 308).[2] Whether or not one agrees with Condé's assessment of *créolité*, which has given rise to some debate, her observation that migration and the experience of "Antilleans" in metropolitan France have not been a source of inspiration for French Caribbean writers is well founded.[3] Her claim can in fact be extended to encompass writers, filmmakers, and scholars from non-Antillean backgrounds, who have also devoted surprisingly little attention to this sizeable migrant population. Similarly, with the exception of a small handful of studies specifically devoted to Antillean migration (including two published since 2004), these internal migrants have largely passed under the radar of sociologists and anthropologists who study race and immigration in contemporary France.[4] In the words of Martinican demographer Claude-Valentin Marie, the forty years of mass migration to the metropole have represented "*Quarante*

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ans où il a été difficile de se compter, quarante ans à avoir eu le sentiment qu'on ne comptait pas [Forty years during which it has been hard to count ourselves, forty years of feeling that we haven't counted]" ("Les Antillais" 102). Though literature and film do not always correlate with social trends, this invisibility—which, as Marie suggests, extends beyond the sphere of cultural representations—is intriguing. That French Caribbean writers have produced a remarkable body of writing that explores the history, geography, and culture of their native islands gives further pause for thought. Given the major impact of migration on both sides of the Atlantic, this emphasis can, on one level, be viewed as a pattern of *insularization*, a compression anchored in the perception that the Caribbean is the only setting in which the unique Creole mix of African, French, and Asian influences can be rendered palpable.

The deficit of accounts of migration and migrants from the Antilles has, for the most part, gone unnoticed by scholars of literature and film. Since we are more accustomed to analyzing how social issues are projected through these media than to diagnosing why they are not, literary-based scholarship on French multiculturalism has been predominantly concerned with stories by and about immigrants from the Maghreb (in French parlance, the former colonies of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco) and their French-born descendants, often referred to as *beurs*, a corpus of representations that has become increasingly abundant since the mid 1980s.[5] People from other non-European backgrounds—West Africans, Asians, Antilleans—sometimes figure in novels and films about *beurs*, particularly when these depict life in the underprivileged suburbs that encircle France's major cities, but they are generally secondary characters. In recent years, as immigration from Sub-Saharan Africa has accelerated, there has been greater representation of immigrants from the former colonies of West and Central Africa, both by members of this population and (as discussed below) by journalists and sociologists concerned with the social effects of the clampdown on both legal and illegal immigration initiated in 1993.[6] By contrast, though today more Antilleans than Sub-Saharan Africans reside in metropolitan France, they have neither garnered the same media attention nor produced a volume of literary works exploring migration, diaspora, and the hybridization of identity in any way analogous to the recent outpouring of works by African-born writers. Though scholarship devoted to migration and its impact on French culture and society has tended to approach contemporary French multiculturalism as a level playing field of, on the one hand, social and economic marginality and, on the other, vibrant cultural achievement, the phenomenon is in reality more uneven, and different migrant groups occupy diverse cultural positions.

In the first part of this essay I address the absence of Antilleans from the most visible contemporary manifestations of French cultural

diversity and consider some factors that explain this latency. The second part looks at a few exceptions in both literature and film; I identify a number of recurrent features in the way Antillean migrants are represented in these works and suggest that these patterns correlate, in different ways, with the social phenomenon of invisibility. There is perhaps a natural tendency, in this context, to approach invisibility as something inherently negative—in other words, to ask what limits or failings of French politics and society allow for the erasure of Antillean migration to the metropole. I have tried to hold this reading in check, although, as will become clear, I do not fundamentally reject it. Interpretation of the political and social signification of Antillean invisibility is ultimately interwoven with judgments about whether "departmentalization," the complete incorporation of some former colonies into the administrative structure of France, has, on balance, been positive or negative in cultural, social, and economic terms. It also involves the evaluation of French policies and attitudes regarding ethnicity, race, and cultural diversity, assessments that demand comparison with other models—the British or Dutch and the American, for example—with which they are often contrasted. Although I touch on all these issues, sustained engagement with these complex debates lies beyond the scope of this essay.

The Antilleans of the Metropole

To comprehend the significance of the effacement in question here, it is helpful to consider some numbers. The percentage of French Antilleans living outside their birth lands rose from 4% in 1954 to 25% in 1990 (Marie, "Antillais" 100).[7] Today, between 310,00 and 500,000 people of Antillean descent live in metropolitan France, a number roughly equivalent to the population of Martinique or Guadeloupe. In the words of Alain Anselin, the hexagon, particularly the Île-de-France—the Parisian region, where most Antillean migrants have settled—constitutes a de facto *troisieme île* ("third island").[8] If immigration were defined as living outside one's birth territory, rather than in terms of nationality, Antilleans would today be the sixth largest immigrant group in France, behind Spaniards, Italians, Portuguese, Algerians, and Moroccans but ahead of Sub-Saharan Africans or Asians considered collectively (Hargreaves 14).

Since the departmentalization of the Caribbean territories in 1946, Antilleans have enjoyed virtually all the privileges of metropolitan residents, notably the right to circulate freely in all French territories. Yet despite this juridical equivalence, internal migration to the metropole has in many respects resembled immigration from former French colonies. During the prosperous post-war years, when immigration from the Maghreb was actively encouraged, migration from the DOM was similarly promoted, with the dual

purpose of mitigating metropolitan labor shortages and easing high unemployment and growing social unrest in the islands. Between 1963 and 1981, under the auspices of the Bureau pour le développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre-mer (BUMIDOM), more than 84,000 Antilleans were recruited to fill unskilled, low-paying jobs in the public sector (Tardieu 122).[9] Today a high percentage of low-level positions in large public concerns such as the postal service (PTT), urban transport (RATP), hospitals, refuse collection, and the police force are filled by *domiens*. During the BUMIDOM years, migrants arriving from the Antilles were often directed toward large *centres d'adaptation* where they were taught basic "French" skills such as cleaning and setting a table (Tardieu 123). As such infantilizing treatment illustrates, despite their official status, Antillean migrants were often regarded as outsiders who lacked the basic skills of civilized society. Unsurprisingly, many Antilleans came to perceive BUMIDOM as the modern face of the ideologies that once supported mercantilism and the slave trade (Tardieu 135).[10] Active recruitment of Antillean workers ended in 1982, and BUMIDOM was replaced by the Agence nationale pour l'insertion et la promotion des travailleurs d'outre-mer (ANT). The new agency was charged with improving the "insertion" of Antillean migrants through training programs and placement in public housing. ANT has also, at times, supported return. Whereas BUMIDOM issued migrant workers a one-way ticket to Paris, its successor offers some applicants a one-way ticket back "home." This problematic about-face suggests, among other things, that Antillean migration is regarded in at least some official circles as reversible, that the metropolitan population is viewed as a kind of temporary commuter community. The internal migration of Antilleans is, in fact, characterized by a dynamic in which return (*rémigration*), recurrent and seasonal migration, and the maintenance of two residences are relatively common (Domenach and Picouet 183). This bipolarity does not mean, however, that the metropolitan Antillean population is a temporary community. Given that it numbers over 300,000, and that the proportion of those born in France has risen steadily from 27.7% in 1975 to 34.5% in 1990 (for Guadeloupeans) and from 31.2% to 38% (for Martinicans), it will most likely, at minimum, reproduce itself, even if migration effectively ends (Domenach and Picouet 203).

Today, over 50% of Antillean migrants live in the Île-de-France, predominantly in working-class suburbs such as Aulnay-sous-bois, Stains, Créteil, and Sarcelles (INSEE, "L'Île de France"). Until the 1990s, this demographic concentration was even higher: the censuses of 1975 and 1982 put the percentage of Antillean migrants living in Île-de-France at between 65% and 75% (Domenach and Picouet 190). More than half of the Antillean population of Île-de-France lives in subsidized public housing, versus 23% for the general population of

the region. (In 1982, 69% of Antilleans in the communes of Stains and Aulnay-sous-bois lived in public housing; Marie, "Populations" 203.) In 1990, unemployment among young Antilleans, including those born in France, stood at 26%, a rate 10% higher than the national average but comparable to the level of joblessness among young people of Maghrebian descent (Marie, "Antillais" 100). What these statistics suggest, of course, is that Antillean migrants have not achieved seamless assimilation into metropolitan society. Rather, as Martinican political scientist Fred Constant asserts, "*En France métropolitaine les Antillais prennent de plus en plus conscience du fait que la couleur fait d'un Français de couleur un étranger* [In metropolitan France, Antilleans have increasingly realized that color makes a French person of color a foreigner]" ("Politique" 110). What is notable and distinctively French about Constant's account of this recognition, as we shall see, is the formulation that Antilleans respond to the hiatus between equality of rights and inequality of fact by defining their status not as that of a racial minority (like African-Americans or Latinos) but as equivalent to that of foreigners.

In recently published studies, sociologist Marc Tardieu and American anthropologist David Beriss consider how Antilleans have confronted these difficult circumstances. Both their studies emphasize the central role played by community associations. Tardieu claims that in Île-de-France, Antilleans hold the record for forming community groups (214); Beriss concludes that the focus of Antillean community building has predominantly been cultural and religious, rather than political and economic, and that Antillean migrants have typically emphasized the preservation of their Creole cultural heritage, expressed in music, dance, and religious observances, rather than issues stemming from life in the diaspora. It is somewhat symptomatic of this phenomenon that the best-known cultural creation of Paris's Antillean community—the popular musical form *zouk*—is widely perceived as a homegrown Guadeloupean phenomenon rather than as a product of diasporic experimentation.[11] The emphasis that Antillean associations place on cultural heritage can be seen to reflect an underlying perception that identity is tied to regional origin rather than, for example, to categories such as race or ethnicity. As we shall see in more detail below, this perspective is one that enjoys wide currency in France. As Constant observes, whereas in the United States membership of a community within the nation characteristically often involves ideas of race or religion, in France identity politics have predominantly been regionalist (*Citoyenneté* 85). Rather like Corsican and Breton identity, Antillean identity has principally been constructed, both by Antilleans and by other French citizens, in terms of geography. Even in the contemporary context of mass migration to the metropole, this definition remains dominant.

Causal Factors

Several explanations immediately suggest themselves for the invisibility of the metropole's Antillean population. The first is that Caribbean identities, constitutively hybrid, are too complex, too fragile, to be portable beyond the archipelago. But the contrasting examples of Jamaicans and Barbadians in Britain and of Haitians, Cubans, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans in the United States, all groups that have founded visible sub-communities with a strong presence in literature, music, and film, as well as local and national politics, problematize this hypothesis. A more substantive explanation along the same lines is that the French Antilles, once slave-holding colonies but since 1946 administrative departments of France, have a long history of resistance to the French doctrine of assimilation. As Constant notes, many Antillean migrants of the 1960s and 1970s felt that social promotion could be achieved only in the metropole, a belief fed by strong centralist and assimilationist currents. By contrast, the vitality, since the late 1960s, of Guadeloupean and Martinican independence movements, as well as the emergence of anti-assimilationist cultural platforms such as *créolité*, reflects widespread disappointment with French policies and attitudes. This disillusion has been particularly acute in the context of immigration, characterized by Constant as "*un processus d'assimilation contrariée* [a process of failed assimilation]" ("Régulation" 89). In 1978 the Association générale des étudiants guadeloupéens ("general association of Guadeloupean students") went so far as to characterize French government support for migration as a policy of "*déportations acquises aux intérêts du grand patronat français* [deportation serving the interests of French enterprise]" (Constant, "Politique" 106). In similar terms, Aimé Césaire denounced migration in 1979 as "*l'hémorragie des forces vives du pays . . . l'expatriation forcée d'une jeunesse sans perspective* [The hemorrhage of the life blood of the country . . . the forced expatriation of a youth with no prospects]" (Constant, "Politique" 112). Inevitably, the literature produced and rewarded with recognition in this charged political environment has been more attentive to local history, politics, and society than to the experience of migration and the construction of diasporic identities. Though the *créolité* "movement," in fact launched in Paris in 1989, is often mentioned in the same breath as other discourses relating to hybridity, *mestizaje/métissage*, and hyphenated and transnational identities, *créolité* differs from these discourses to the extent that it has a strong regionalist dimension and foregrounds authentic cultural traditions such as folklore and oral transmission, albeit traditions acknowledged to have arisen from cultural mixing.

Another obvious explanation is that Antilleans travel to France not as immigrants but as French citizens. In their relocation no political

boundaries are crossed, no national identities exchanged. But while nationality is clearly a crucial factor, to focus exclusively on citizenship would be to neglect the many areas of overlap between internal mass migration from the Antilles and immigration from France's former colonies in Africa and Asia. As Marie puts it, Antilleans have in many respects been "*Français de droit*" but "*immigrés de fait*" (French by law but immigrants in fact; "Populations" 191). Like immigration from North Africa, Antillean migration peaked in the 1960s and 1970s. It resulted from similar economic causes: increased demand for labor in France, high un- or under-employment rates and low economic growth in the birth nation or region. In both cases the French state at first encouraged migration and later (from the time of the oil crisis of 1973) attempted to curtail it. Comparison with other Caribbean migrations also shows that nationality is not of itself a determining factor. Puerto Ricans, for example, enter the United States as citizens (though not as residents of a state) and have developed a well-defined hybrid identity expressed in parades, music, and literature as well as in politics and local government.

Since the relative invisibility of Antillean migrants contrasts with the high profile of Maghrebians, in considering which factors have conspired to make Antillean migration invisible, it is useful to consider the forces that account for the strong cultural presence of Maghrebians. (Below I argue that we can identify what amounts to a structural link between the contrasting positions of Maghrebians and Antilleans.) Factoring Maghrebians into the analysis also clarifies the point that nationality is not the determining factor, because people of North African origin became visible in French media and culture only in the 1980s, with the coming of age of a second generation, the so-called *beurs*, young people who in many cases held French nationality. Yet though *beurs* are not immigrants, they are the children of immigrants, and they are widely perceived and defined as such. As Alec Hargreaves writes, issues felt in the United States and British contexts as matters of race are, in France, generally framed as questions of immigration. Thus, when the term *beurs* fell from favor in the 1990s, it was widely replaced by the adjectival phrase, "*issu(e)s de l'immigration*" ("from immigrant backgrounds"),[12] a cumbersome epithet that equates between being born to immigrant parents with other social characteristics, such as being unemployed, being under-educated, or living in a rough working-class suburb. In a manner characteristic of French thinking on nationality, race, and culture, a single factor—the national origin of the previous generation—stands for a network of social problems.

The perceived foreignness of Maghrebians, of course, is also connected to the presence of such tangible markers of diversity as differences of language and religion. These differences are clearly less significant in the case of Antilleans, who are

predominantly Catholic (though the metropolitan community counts many Pentecostals) and who speak French, albeit with a regional accent and sometimes alongside Creole. Since the colonization of Algeria, religion—or, more specifically, the central place of Islam in North African culture—has been interpreted and imposed as a dividing line between French citizens and Maghrebians. This perspective was the basis for the *Senatus Consultus* of 1865, the legislation that divided the population of Algeria into two groups: French citizens and a subject population of Muslim Algerians who, declining to adhere to the French Civil Code, instead retained their personal status under Islamic law.[13] The rise of Islamic radicalism, beginning in the late 1970s, intensified this long-standing perception of incompatibility grounded in religious difference. Yet the role of religion as a dividing factor should not be accepted uncritically. In colonial Algeria, Islam was not simply perceived as a mark of alterity but also produced as such, serving as a rationale for the subordination and disappropriation of the majority indigenous population. In the postcolonial context of immigration, the isolation of religion from the social and economic context in which it is embedded—factors such as high unemployment and urban overcrowding—has fulfilled a similar function. As surveys of French attitudes on race and ethnicity conducted in the last decade have shown, religion (Islam) is often identified as the reason North Africans have not successfully "integrated," as a source of social conflict, and even as a justification for discrimination. But responses of this kind can be misleading. Perceptions of alterity are, in most instances, both historically specific and multifaceted. They arise from particular historical circumstances, rather than from the natural and universal incompatibility of religions. A single factor, such as religion, may be identified as the foundation of difference, but other factors generally come into play. This kind of distortion is, I would suggest, particularly prevalent in France, where references to related categories such race and ethnicity are subject to strong taboos.

The commonalities of result between Antilleans and Maghrebians suggest that, in addition to criteria such as religion, language, and national origin, other factors, notably phenotype, are at issue. Since at least the late nineteenth century, French public policy and social sciences have predominantly dismissed the validity of race as a basis for government action and sociological analysis. This skepticism is often cited in denials of the existence of race-based prejudice in France: If there are no races, how can there be any racism? The invisibility of Antilleans is, I want to suggest, in some part a coefficient of this color-blindness. It arises not because France is in fact not racist but because race and racism are unrepresentable in the context of French intellectual and political life.[14]

The Eclipse Effect

Antilleans and Maghrebians

Collective identities are inherently relational. They coalesce through comparisons made among different groups both by people within the group and by external observers. The acknowledged existence of one ethnic or cultural "minority" generally contributes to the parallel recognition of others. In some circumstances, however, the high profile of one group can render others less noticeable. This, I would argue, has been the case in France, where, despite deep-seated resistance to the very idea that there are ethnic minorities within the nation, one group—Maghrebian immigrants and their descendants—has since the early 1980s been widely recognized as such. Since this watershed, Maghrebians and *beurs* have drawn a disproportionate share of French public reflection on national diversity.

In her short essay "Are the Black British Setting the Example?" Maryse Condé gestures toward this eclipse effect. She claims that whereas in Britain, following the inner-city riots of the 1970s and 1980s, black people staked out a prominent place in politics and culture, achieving recognition as black British citizens, in France, black Africans and Antilleans have suffered comparable racism without achieving analogous social recognition. For Condé, the only group in France that can be compared with the "black British" are Maghrebians. As evidence, she points to the many Maghrebian and *beur* intellectuals and performers who are widely known in France: Tahar Ben-Jelloun, Khaled, Azouz Begag, Smaïn, Yamina Benguigi, and the soccer star Zinédine Zidane, among many others. Condé also anticipates that Maghrebian immigrants, like Italians and Spaniards before them, will ultimately integrate, while French blacks continue to occupy a marginal, underprivileged position.

These observations raise several questions: for example, Have Maghrebians achieved significant representation in politics, or only in culture and the media?[15] and, correspondingly, How deep do the gains made by British blacks run? Nonetheless, Condé's claim that black French people from the Antilles (unlike Condé, for reasons already mentioned and developed below, I do not include Sub-Saharan African immigrants), though subject to many of the same prejudices as people from the Maghreb, have not acquired a comparable cultural voice, is incontestable. I would, in fact, stretch her argument further by proposing that the conspicuousness of the Maghrebian community is structurally linked to the low profile of Antilleans, and that this adumbration has deep historical roots. It is not possible to present in detail here the historical dimension of this claim, but I will briefly outline a few points for consideration.

These necessarily impressionistic reflections bespeak the need for more nuanced study of the complex, often asymmetrical relationship between, on the one hand, European discourses on Islam and the Arab world and, on the other, representations of people of African descent, particularly in the context of the history of slavery.

Until the final decades of the eighteenth century, France's lucrative slave trade and colonial ventures in the Caribbean were only sparsely represented in philosophy, fiction, and the visual arts.[16] In marked contrast, by the late seventeenth century, the Muslim "Orient," though not yet a site of conquest, was already an object of exoticism, generating the discursive explosion that we have come to know as Orientalism.

In more recent times, when Frantz Fanon, a young psychiatrist from Martinique, published his ground-breaking anatomy of racism and racial identity, *Peau noire, masques blancs* [*Black Skin, White Masks*] in 1952, he noted that Antilleans like himself were often subject to victimization because they were mistaken for migrant workers from the Maghreb (73). Fanon, of course, subsequently requested transfer to a hospital in Blida, Algeria, joining his destiny to that of the Algerian people in their struggle for self-determination. Fanon was not alone in linking the Antillean experience with the Algerian cause; the association of the Antilles and Algeria in discussions of the future of France's colonies goes back at least until the 1940s. Prior to the emergence of an Algerian movement for self-determination, Algerians and Antilleans found common cause in their demands for fuller integration into the political and administrative structure of France. For example, when René Boisneuf and Joseph Lagrosillière, deputies from Martinique and Guadeloupe, made the case for the departmentalization of the Antillean islands after World War I, they included Algeria in their proposal to the National Assembly (Tardieu 93). And when Charles de Gaulle visited Guadeloupe in May 1960, he seized the occasion to address not only the serious problems facing the depressed and agitated Antillean colonies but also the still more pressing question of the future of Algeria (Tardieu 103–4). Nor was Fanon the only young Antillean intellectual of his generation to side with the Algerian cause. The Martinican writer-philosopher Édouard Glissant was one of the signatories of the Manifesto of the 121, a petition of prominent writers and publishers against the Algerian War, and was asked by the Algerian writer Kateb Yacine to write the preface for his drama of colonization, *Le cadavre encerclé* [*The Encircled Corpse*]. In the early 1960s the Organisation de la jeunesse anti-coloniale de la Martinique (OJAM), a militant Martinican student movement influenced by the work of Fanon, drew on the rhetoric of Algerian nationalism in voicing its demand for Martinique's autonomy (Tardieu 111–4). More recently Harlem Désir, the charismatic co-founder of the French

antiracist organization S.O.S. Racisme and a French citizen of mixed Martinican and Alsacian descent, became, like Fanon, closely identified not just with "antiracism" as a universal humanitarian cause but with the struggle of a specific minority group, the *beurs*. The question of mistaken identity evoked by Fanon notwithstanding, solidarity among Antilleans and Algerians was grounded not in a sense of collective identity but in a shared ideological response to colonialism. But though Antilleans understood first-hand the propinquity of colonialism and racism, they did not necessarily anticipate that the Algerian War would come to overshadow other anticolonial struggles, or that disentitlement and social marginality would come to be almost exclusively associated with Maghrebian immigrants.[17]

Colonial rule in the Maghreb and the Algerian War of Independence have by no means been consistent preoccupations of French politics and intellectual life. Memory of the Algerian War was quickly repressed after 1962 and has been revived only in the last two decades, partly as a result of the visibility and vitality of the Maghrebian immigrant community. Yet if remembrance of the war in Algeria has followed the trajectory that Henri Rousso calls the "Vichy syndrome"—a period of amnesia followed by a phase of obsessive commemoration—the same cannot be said of the French war of decolonization that most closely resembles the Algerian conflict in its intensity and brutality: the struggle to bring an end to slavery and colonial rule in Haiti. This brutal war of attrition, fought between 1792 and 1804, has never had in French political and cultural life a place even remotely analogous to that which "Algeria" now occupies.[18]

The events organized in 1998 to commemorate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the abolition of slavery in France's colonies illustrate this asymmetry, for they patently lacked the sense of political urgency attached to recent public remembrances of war in Algeria. Many Antilleans chose to boycott the public events in order to distance themselves from the self-congratulatory account of abolition promulgated by the government.[19] On 23 May, some 40,000 Antilleans took to the streets of Paris to stage their own commemoration of slavery and abolition. In the present context, their decision to channel memory and protest into a *silent* march seems deeply emblematic. As Catherine Reinhardt notes in an article on the observation of this anniversary in France and the Antilles, memory must sometimes be tempered for the purposes of unity, but a prior coming to terms is required, and "in the case of slavery this unspoken acknowledgement never took place" (14). Following the abolition of slavery in 1848, Antilleans, "deemed problematic by the State," were effectively relegated to the status of second-class citizens, while, on the level of public discourse, "their entire history was replaced by that of the French nation" (14).

The silent protest of 1998 did not go entirely unheard by the Chirac administration. In 2001 the French National Assembly passed a law proposed by a deputy from Guyana, recognizing slavery as a crime against humanity (though denying the existence of a right to reparations). It also convened a committee for the memory of slavery, which was constituted in 2004 and is chaired by Maryse Condé. The march also had reverberations in the Antillean migrant community. These included the creation of an association, the Comité Marche du 23 Mai 1998 (CM98), committed to maintaining consciousness of the history of slavery and to uniting Antilleans in this goal. The thorny question of collective identity, however, continues to reverberate in these efforts. In the aftermath of the rioting that shook French suburbs in November 2005, CM98 voiced its differences with a new umbrella organization, the Conseil représentatif des associations noires de France (CRAN), that was established as a consequence of the protests. In a public statement, the leaders of CM98 distanced themselves from this organization in the following terms:

> *Nous, Antillais et Guyanais, n'appartenons pas à une communauté noire, mais à une communauté de Français descendants d'esclaves, ni blancs, ni noirs*.
> [We, Antilleans and Guyanese, do not belong to a black community, but to a community of French people descended from slaves, neither white nor black.]

Though the divergences voiced here doubtless reflect political rivalry between two associations vying for attention and influence, the language used mobilizes a distinctively French suspicion of race as a marker of identity, affirming, instead, the defining role of history and geography.[20] Other groups and thinkers have also expressed reservations about the formation of a black social movement, citing communitarism and ghettoization as possible consequences (see, e.g., Wieviorka).

France's distinctive brand of republicanism, sometimes called the "Jacobin" model of nationhood, is a political philosophy characterized by strong centralizing and assimilationist tendencies. One of its principal tenets is a reluctance to recognize citizens' allegiance to groups or causes other than the nation itself. There is, however, another side to this equation, for if the French state and key currents in French thought have historically denied, discouraged, or even suppressed intranational manifestations of diversity, identitarian allegiances based on region, language, or religion, the existence of diversity among nations and continents has, by contrast, been underscored. The emphasis in French colonial rhetoric on "assimilation" and, in the postcolonial era of immigration, on "integration," in fact testifies to an underlying assumption that peoples differ in significant ways

and that individuals must therefore undergo a process of adaptation in order to be successful in joining another society.

In the 1970s and 1980s the Jacobin model was challenged by the emergence of a consensus that immigrants from one region, the Maghreb, were not assimilating and had, in fact, come to constitute an ethnic minority. This crisis of nationhood led to a more open acknowledgment of minority communities, articulated both in state policies (educational initiatives, the establishment of priority urban development zones, funding for community associations) and in the work of grass-roots organizations. But this shift was to a great extent predicated on a logic that, on a secondary level, preserved the ideal of France as a unified nation with a single, relatively homogeneous culture. That is to say, Maghrebians were acknowledged to constitute an ethnic minority on the basis that they were *immigrants* from *foreign* countries with different cultural and religious traditions. More significantly, this rationalization has been extended to the children of immigrants, who, as noted earlier, are now often gathered under the catch-all formula *issues de l'immigration*. This alignment of diversity with foreignness has been central, albeit in different ways and to different ends, to the positions of thinkers from all parts of the French political spectrum. It is central to the extreme right Front National party's calls for the repatriation of Algerian and Moroccan immigrants, but it also resonates in some left-wing advocacy for French secularism. However sympathetically one views the French model of nationality without race or religious sectarianism—and there are certainly arguments to be made for it—it is clear that, on some level, this response to the social and economic tensions associated with immigration constitutes a failure to come to terms with the expansion of the nation's borders in both the colonial past and the transnational European present.

Antilleans and Sub-Saharan Africans

As mentioned above, I differ slightly from Maryse Condé, to the extent that I do not perceive the relatively new population of Sub-Saharan immigrants to France as constituting, like Antilleans, an invisible community. Since the mid-1990s, black African migrants have garnered a great deal of media attention, some sympathetic, some hostile and xenophobic. Several factors help to explain this development. Immigration from Sub-Saharan Africa to France was limited until the mid-1980s but has increased rapidly over the past two decades. This acceleration has coincided with attempts by successive French administrations to close France's borders to immigrants from outside the European Union. This policy shift, sealed by the draconian Pasqua Laws of 1993, resulted in an increase in illegal immigration as well as an escalation of the state's

determination and power to police its borders. In the mid-1990s, "clandestine" immigrants, many of whom came from West African nations such as Mali and Senegal, were routinely sent home on now-infamous charter flights. In response to this inhumane treatment, in June 1996 a group of illegal immigrants took refuge in the St. Bernard Church in Paris to draw attention to their plight and with the goal of pleading their case for regularization. The dramatic unfolding of events at the church, which included the appointment of a council of mediators composed of famous French public figures as well as visits from celebrities such as Danielle Mitterand, widow of a former French president, and actor Emmanuelle Béart, was closely followed in the French press. In the wake of the protest, the *sans-papiers* ("people without papers," or undocumented immigrants) have become the new emblematic figures of French immigration. Several spokespeople for the "*sans*" movement, notably Ababacar Diop and Madjiguène Cissé, have published memoirs detailing their own experiences and presenting the overall picture of clandestine migration from Sub-Saharan Africa. Antilleans, who are documented, have of course not been directly mobilized by these events.

The Sub-Saharan community has been a center of attention for other reasons, notably in connection with a series of gender-focused concerns such as the practice of polygamy and female genital excision in France. Polygamy, which in some cases involves the cohabitation of a man, several co-wives, and their children in a single apartment, is often invoked in the context of heated discussions of urban overcrowding. In a variation on this theme, when, in the summer of 2005, fires swept through several dilapidated Parisian buildings that were home to large numbers of immigrants, Africans came to be viewed as the victims rather than the perpetrators of urban overcrowding,

In conjunction with their growing numbers and high public profile, Sub-Saharan migrants have produced a rich body of literature and, in recent years, also a number of films—including *L'Afrance* and *Inspirez, Expirez* (2001)—devoted to migration and life in Europe. In a recent study titled *Afrique sur Seine [Africa on the Seine]*, literary scholar Odile Cazenave examines the growing corpus of novels by Sub-Saharan African writers based in France, works such as Calixthe Beyala's *Petit Prince de Belleville* (1992), Simon Njami's *African Gigolo* (1989), and Alain Mabanckou's *Bleu, Blanc, Rouge* (1999).[21] In her introduction Cazenave undertakes to compare this corpus with other examples of what she calls "literatures of exile, literature of immigration," notably the "beur novel" and the "Antillean novel" (4). But though she finds much to say about *beur* literature, when the time comes to turn to Antillean writing, the basis for comparison disintegrates. This fade-out reflects an underlying asymmetry, the surprisingly limited number of texts by Antillean writers to which recent popular novels about Africans in France

could meaningfully be compared. As noted above, whereas writers from North and West African backgrounds have established emigration, hybridity, and urban multiculturalism as key literary themes, writers from Antillean backgrounds have predominantly drawn inspiration from the distinct topography, history, and culture of the Caribbean.

A few recent initiatives (including CRAN, discussed above) have aimed at building a movement for rights and representation that treats African and Antillean citizens and residents as a single category. In 2000 another association, Collectif égalité ("Equality Collective"), called for greater representation of blacks in the media, notably on French television, where the presence of black and *beur* journalists and actors has been very limited. Collectif égalité's threat to call a boycott of the telecom company Bouygues, which owns TF1, one of the principal French television channels, paid off to the extent that two news anchors of Antillean origin were quickly appointed. The principal spokesperson for the association is Calixthe Beyala, a Cameroon-born writer who has published several well-received novels and been the subject of considerable media attention, but its leaders also include at least one Antillean, Luc Saint-Eloi, an actor-producer born in Djibouti but raised in Guadeloupe. Another association currently militating for increased integration of minorities in French public life is Africagora, founded in 1999 by Ivorian-born Dogad Dogoui. Conceived as a political and business club, Africagora promotes the career development of French minorities. However, though its members come from diverse backgrounds, the leadership is entirely African, and it is legitimate to wonder whether, without input from the French Sub-Saharan community, Antilleans would independently have begun to exert pressure on the media, business, and political elites for increased representation in these crucial domains—and, particularly, whether they would have adopted a "black" or African diaspora platform as opposed to one grounded in regional causes.

Immigration, Race, and Culture

The centrality of immigration to French reflections on diversity is the product of a complex set of forces. As noted earlier, race has long been regarded with skepticism in French biological and social sciences, and this disavowal corresponds to the state's reluctance, since the time of the revolution, to recognize the existence of racial or ethnic communities within the nation. By contrast, the French ethnographic tradition has typically acknowledged—and, indeed, emphasized—the existence of cultural differences among nations and regions, subscribing to the view that each tribe, nation, or region has its own distinctive culture. Within this framework, as

the philosopher Étienne Balibar has observed, the cultures of other peoples are typically imagined as something akin to a closed system or self-contained environment. That is to say, cultures are perceived not as a set of attributes that individuals create, or as an identity that they self-consciously affirm, but as an inert and defining reality that shapes values and core beliefs.[22] This understanding of culture is obviously not limited to France, but it is strongly reflected in French ethnography and human sciences. For Balibar, it constitutes the foundation for what he calls "racism without races" or "neo-racism": the replacement of race with culture as the hierarchical and static template of difference. Cultures, he proposes, are understood to be different but not equal. Notably, they are perceived to shape the actions and outlooks of their members to differing degrees. Third World cultures, in particular, are widely represented as static and determining, and, correspondingly, immigrants from Third World nations are presumed to be weighed down by "cultural baggage" that impedes their successful integration. Cultural differences do, of course, sometimes create tensions and generate real debates about the range of practices that may be considered acceptable and desirable in a nation. But, as Balibar suggests, differences are too often reduced to binarisms, and the burden of responsibility for social conflict placed on the shoulders of immigrants while the responsibilities of the state and public policy, along with the effects of latent racism in the host nation, are ignored.

As French citizens, Antilleans do not figure centrally in public debates about immigration, or in the scholarly literature that has grown in tandem with these debates.[23] Even in situated accounts of prejudice and discrimination, such as Michel Wieviorka's closely observed sociology of racism in French politics, enterprise, and education, *La France raciste* [*Racist France*], Antilleans occupy only a small place and are at times problematically conflated with non-French blacks.[24] There is, however, a structural connection between the current preoccupation with immigrants' place in French society and the cultural invisibility of Antilleans, in the sense that the existence of this "intrastate diaspora" complicates the ideological grid of one nation, one culture, that anchors the central opposition between French and foreign, native and immigrant.[25] Their position as French natives who have faced significant problems of integration invites recognition that integration is not exclusively linked to immigration and suggests that racial prejudice, as well as the difficulties of linguistic and cultural adaptation associated with immigration, play a role in the genesis of social adversity.[26] By extension, the complex cultural position of Antilleans as insider/outsiders provides a counterpoint to traditional French republicanism, exemplifying the hybrid, amorphous, open-ended nature of cultural identities. As noted earlier, it is not simply the case that Antillean

migrants are underrepresented in political debates and in the varied work of French writers, filmmakers, and sociologists. *Domiens* themselves have also generally adopted a geocultural approach to identity, marking a clear line of demarcation between Caribbean and metropolitan cultural traditions. This shared conceptual framework certainly reflects the penetration of French human sciences throughout the former colonies, but it also signals a response in kind. Presented with an idea of national culture to which they are required to conform, yet which effectively excludes them, Antilleans have responded by a parallel affirmation of their own heritage as a tradition, like "French culture," rooted in territory and history.

Exceptions and Their Rules

The second part of this essay considers exceptions to this rule—the small handful of novels and films that do portray Antilleans living in metropolitan France. Building on points made above, I suggest that in these works Antillean migrants are recurrently framed in one or both of two ways. The first pattern involves the translation of feelings of cultural invisibility into the representation of Antilleans as a hidden, almost subterranean community. The second consists of the pairing of Antillean characters with figures whose ethnic identity is more clearly marked, usually North or West Africans. This pairing involves a reciprocal effect whereby, on the one hand, Antillean "difference" fades from consciousness while, on the other, the identity of the second character is magnified.

Texts by Antillean writers that focus on life in the metropole fall into two broad categories that are connected both to generation and to social class. There are works by "elite" migrants, students, and intellectuals who alighted in Paris between the 1920s and the 1960s and who, in a context of heightened consciousness of colonialism and racism, wrote about their experience as black Francophones from personal perspectives. Among these are Andrée, Paulette, and Jane Nardal, sisters from Martinique, who studied, wrote, and held a literary salon in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s; Aimé Césaire, poet, essayist, political leader, and co-founder of the Négritude movement, who studied in Paris from 1931 to 1939; the novelist Maryse Condé, who also studied in Paris in the mid-1950s; and Daniel Maximin, another contemporary Guadeloupean writer and journalist who studied in Paris in the 1960s and who has held posts in education and cultural administration on both sides of the Atlantic.[27] There are also works produced since the era of mass migration, in which the existence of an Antillean community comes into focus. Here I will address only this second corpus, which is smaller and which, to date,

has received less critical attention than the first. As will be evident, the works examined below are diverse in genre and tone as well as in complexity and quality.

"Domestic" Workers

The literature of Antillean migration was inaugurated in 1978 with the posthumous publication of Françoise Ega's epistolary novel, *Lettres à une noire: récit antillais* [*Letters to a Black Woman: A Caribbean Story*]. Presented in the guise of letters written by "Maméga"—an Antillean woman who lives in Marseilles and works as a housekeeper while, in her spare time, writing a novel about her experiences—to a woman named Carolina, who lives in a Brazilian *favela*, the novel transposes into fiction some details of the life of Françoise Ega (known to her friends as "Maméga"), who, like her protagonist, wrote novels while working to support her family. In a book chapter devoted to this novel, Mireille Rosello cleverly styles Ega a "*femme de ménage des lettres* [cleaning woman of letters]," a title that captures one of the most interesting aspects of the novel, Ega's rare sense of just how difficult it is to build bridges between the milieu of unskilled economic migrants and the world of cultural production (Rosello, "Lettres"). In one of her early letters Maméga makes it clear that she does not actually send her letters to Carolina, who is illiterate and presumably does not communicate in French. Consequently, like the novel of which they chronicle the progress, the letters themselves take on the status of fictional creations, textual experiments in the relationship between literature and lived experience.[28] With Carolina's status changed from recipient to something more akin to an ideal reader of a particular kind, the text's mode of epistolary address is opened up to encompass all potential readers, particularly those most directly concerned by her stories and perhaps least likely to read them: female domestic workers and their employers.

One of the central themes of *Lettres à une noire* is solidarity among Antillean women migrants. The letters recount Maméga's encounters with other black women performing paid domestic labor in Marseilles. Some have traveled to the metropole under their own steam; others have been recruited by agencies or by individual employers who are intent on recouping their investment. Somewhat older and better established than her compatriots, Maméga listens patiently to their stories of mistreatment by employers and offers valuable practical advice. By all accounts, Françoise Ega played a similar nurturing role in the emerging Caribbean community of Marseilles, and she was widely mourned at her death in 1976. Cataloguing her protagonist's interactions with other Antillean women, Ega exposes what she perceives as a hidden system of exploitation, the laws of an underground market in domestic labor, which,

though legal to the extent that the employees are "domestic" rather than foreign, in other respects operates in an unregulated, clandestine manner. Ega's focus on women workers captures an important dimension of Antillean migration. Since the beginnings of mass migration in the 1960s, women have constituted a high percentage of migrants from the DOM. Whereas North African immigration was essentially a male phenomenon until the 1970s, Antillean women migrants outnumbered men by the 1982 French census, and today make up about 54% of *domiens* residing in the metropole (INSEE, "L'Île de France"). Foreshadowing recent awareness of the challenges faced by women in the global labor market, Ega chronicles the different ways in which, with a sense of impunity, white metropolitan employers underpay and disrespect their "domestic" employees. As Rosello observes, Ega explores female "domestic" labor as a mode of work that, because it straddles traditional oppositions between inside and outside, home and work, family and production, is difficult to recognize and legislate and all too easy to abuse. I would add that because the women workers of Ega's novel also straddle the divide between French and foreign, citizen and immigrant, their precarious situation exposes, in particular, the limitations of such rigid social categories, illustrating the need for definitions of work that are more attuned to the complex and shifting realities of the labor market.

Given the exposé quality of *Lettres à une noire*—the light that Ega shines on the labor conditions faced by Antillean workers—and the emphasis that she places on community-building, it could have been expected to give rise to a genre, inspiring other works that explore migration and the growth of a transplant community in the metropole. Instead it stands virtually alone—one of very few works of fiction to depict the experience of Antilleans in France and perhaps the only novel that addresses the disconnect between the sphere of culture in which Caribbean writers have historically moved and the service sector and world of domestic labor within which most Caribbean migrants operate.

Underground Networks: *Antilles sur Seine*

Antilleans are portrayed as an "unrepresented" community in a somewhat different sense in the recent comedy film *Antilles sur Seine*, directed by Pascal Légitimus, a Paris-born actor of mixed Guadeloupean and Armenian descent. The story is about the kidnapping of the wife of the mayor of Marie-Galante (one of the islands of Guadeloupe), while on a trip to Paris, by blackmailers hired by a pair of nefarious *békés* (white Creole landowners). Arriving in the capital to plead for her release, the mayor and his sons soon discover that although the Paris police are, on the whole, unresponsive and incompetent, they can draw on a deep reservoir of support from the local

Antillean community. As the plot unfolds, a veritable underground mafia of Antillean workers—without whom, it is implied, Paris would quickly grind to a halt—is brought to light. The sudden visibility of these underpaid yet essential workers—nurses, policemen, postal and telecommunications workers, and taxi and bus drivers, among others—is in fact the main joke around which the story revolves. Significantly, however, for this sense of solidarity to emerge there has to be an external trigger: renewed contact with compatriots from the islands. Billed as the film "*qui va vous tropicaliser* [that will tropicalize you]," *Antilles sur Seine* in fact depicts a migrant community "retropicalized" by compatriots freshly arrived from Guadeloupe.

While *Antilles sur Seine* must get some credit for shaking up the tired formula of the mainstream French comedy/police drama by casting an actress in her forties in a leading role as a police commissioner, introducing an array of black characters, and approaching race and cultural diversity in a frank, uninhibited way, it is in many other respects a disappointing film. Though it attempts to expose and unsettle the latent racism of French society, it often seems rather to reinforce racist attitudes by falling back on stereotyped representations of Antilleans. In several scenes violence, including sexual assault, is shown in a disturbingly blasé manner, and the screenplay often falls back on crude body humor. The schizophrenia with which the film tries to tear down cultural barriers while pandering to the lowest common denominator of chauvinism reflects, among other things, some uncertainty about the target audience. Addressing itself at once to a virtual community of black filmgoers, to spectators sympathetic to cultural diversity, and to a more "mainstream" French public, *Antilles sur Seine* tries to speak to each group in turn, with the result that it alternately ridicules and sanctions prejudice.

Insider/Outsiders: *Papillon dans la cité* and *Métisse*

In a number of films and novels, the theme of social invisibility is developed through a different device: the pairing of Antillean protagonists with characters whose cultural difference is more clearly marked. These juxtapositions occur principally in works that explore the multicultural composition of France's underprivileged suburbs.

The most accomplished novelist who has explored the experience of the Hexagon's Antilleans is Gisèle Pineau, a writer born in Paris to Guadeloupean parents. Pineau has principally written about this community in her children's fiction, no doubt because of her own childhood struggle for acceptance, but perhaps also because in her other writing, notably her poetic tour de force, *La Grande drive des esprits* [*The Drifting of Spirits*], she has felt more keenly the force of a literary environment that confers recognition on writing that deals

principally with the history and culture of the Antilles.[29] In two untranslated novels for children, *Papillon dans la cité* [*Butterfly in the City*] and *Caraïbes sur Seine* [*Caribbean-on-the-Seine*], Pineau paints the capital's working-class suburbs as gritty, multiethnic environments in which Antilleans live alongside immigrants from the Maghreb, West Africa, and southern Europe. In both narratives, protagonists born in the Antilles, though they suffer from displacement and nostalgia, are subject to far less social alienation and educational disadvantage than counterparts from immigrant backgrounds. I will consider the implications of this juxtaposition in a reading of *Papillon dans la cité*, but similar arguments could be made in relation to *Caraïbes sur Seine*.

Papillon dans la cité is about a ten-year old girl, Félicie, who moves from her grandmother's home in rural Guadeloupe to join her mother and stepfather in a Paris housing project. At school in Paris Félicie makes friends with a boy called Mohamed, whose family is from Algeria. When she visits Mohamed's home, Félicie falls under the spell of exotic difference. The polished bronze platters, patterned rugs, and fringed curtains that ornament his apartment intrigue her, and she loves the delicious pastries served by Mohamed's grandmother. Time passes, and the children's friendship is tested when, one summer, Mohamed joins a gang of older boys with a bad reputation. To save him from a seemingly inevitable fall into delinquency, Félicie turns to a sympathetic teacher, who (rather felicitously) persuades the municipal authorities to subsidize a *classe de mer* (a class excursion to the seaside) in Guadeloupe. Mohamed, who had never laid eyes on the sea before this trip, falls in love with the ocean and starts to envisage a life beyond the stark confines of his *banlieue*.

This heartwarming story is obviously driven by pedagogical concerns, including the imperative to portray interactions among people of different cultural backgrounds in a positive light. What is striking about this projection in the present context, however, is the asymmetrical rendering of different ethnic identities. Mohamed's Maghrebian background is clearly marked: it is evident in his name, the clothes and cooking of his grandmother, and the furnishings of his home. But if it is portable, it is also remote: there is little likelihood that he will some day "return" to an ancestral home in Algeria. By contrast, Félicie is separated from her birth land by an open boundary. She is able to visit her grandmother during the *classe de mer*, and the story ends with the prospect that her family will one day return to Guadeloupe. Perhaps correspondingly, Félicie's ethnic identity is less well defined, and she is portrayed as being in less material danger in the *banlieue* than her Maghrebian friend.

The pairing of Félicie and Mohamed produces a reciprocal effect whereby, on the one hand, Félicie's black skin and Caribbean background are eclipsed by Mohamed's profile as an immigrant and,

on the other, Mohamed's cultural identity as a Muslim from a Maghrebian immigrant family is magnified by Félicie's status as a black French citizen. Building on a suggestive connection made by David Beriss, I would like to compare the role that the Antillean protagonist plays in this story with the way that Georg Simmel defines strangers and outsiders in his 1908 essay "The Stranger" (Beriss, "Culture" 129). In this seminal piece Simmel observes that strangers are generally not complete outsiders, rootless wanderers who visit and move on, but *settled* outsiders whose marginality is defined from within the dominant social group: "In spite of being inorganically appended to it, the stranger is yet an organic member of the group" (408). This has historically been the position of European Jews, among other groups, and it reflects the position of the destitute of many societies. Paradoxically, settled strangers help to define the boundaries of a society because, in certain respects, they enjoy insider status, their nominal inclusion legitimizing the perception of other outsiders as absolutely foreign. In contemporary France the dual status of Antilleans as citizens and migrants, insiders and cultural others, similarly upholds the perception of other outsiders, notably Maghrebian immigrants, as not only foreigners but also members of a fundamentally different culture that eludes assimilation.

The pairing of Antillean protagonists with characters from more clearly defined cultural backgrounds has been a feature of several recent films that attempt to stage the multiculturalism of contemporary France. Among these are Serge Meynard's 1987 comedy, *L'Oeil au beur(re) noir* [*The Black Eye*], in which Pascal Légitimus appears as the black sidekick of the popular Algerian-born comedian Smaïn, and Mathieu Kassovitz's 1993 *Métisse* [*Café au lait*], on which I will focus here.[30] Like Kassovitz's César-winning drama *La Haine* [*Hate*] (1995), *Métisse*, the director's first feature film, explores Paris's suburbs as multiethnic spaces in which working-class white people live alongside residents of Maghrebian, Caribbean, and African descent. Kassovitz's "*black, blanc, beur*" perspective is articulated with particular emphasis in *Métisse*, in which Lola, an attractive, light-skinned black woman from Martinique, finds herself pregnant with a child whose father could be either Félix, a working-class Jewish bicycle-messenger with a penchant for rap music, or Jamal, an upper-class West African Muslim whose father is a diplomat and who lives in a spacious apartment in an affluent *arrondissement*. Since Lola is unable to choose between the two potential fathers, and since they, after initial reservations, both decide to stick with her, the trio teams up to constitute a new, multiethnic family unit. The film's title, *Métisse* (literally, "a mixed-race woman"), initially seems to refer to Lola, but it soon comes to designate instead the non-traditional family that forms around Lola and her child. As this new unit takes shape, emphasis shifts away from the two

men's feelings for Lola toward their relationship with each other. (In fact, it becomes increasingly difficult to view this story as a work with a feminist viewpoint: though Lola at first seems to dictate the terms of her relationships, as the film progresses she becomes increasingly passive, her capacity for agency seemingly absorbed by her pregnant body.)

In *Métisse*'s projection of harmonious French multiculturalism, ethnic identities appear more or less marked in accordance with the prominence or invisibility of other characters'. In a commentary on this film, Rosello suggests, along these lines, that Félix's cultural position as a white French Jew is eclipsed by Lola's and Jamal's more visible black identities (*Declining* 65). Though there is obviously a somatic basis for this interpretation, I would suggest that Lola's blackness actually becomes less visible when juxtaposed with the cultural manifestations of African/Muslim and Jewish/working-class identity, and, indeed, that her body comes to furnish the comparatively neutral ground on which the men's more strongly marked ethnic and class identities meet. The publicity blurb on the cover of the American version of *Métisse* neatly conveys this point in its reduction of the plot to the following equation: "Jamal is black; Félix is Jewish; Lola is pregnant!" This emphasis is borne out in one key scene of multicultural negotiation in which Félix invites Lola and Jamal to dinner at his grandparents' apartment in the working-class suburb of Saint-Denis. At an awkward pause in the conversation, Félix's grandmother turns to Jamal and, having gratuitously observed that he is black—"*alors comme ça vous êtes noir?* [So, you're black?]"—proceeds to ask him if he is Jewish. While Jamal tries to inform her that he is actually a Muslim, and Félix tries to stop him from sharing this potentially inflammatory information, the grandmother blithely launches into the explanation that in Ethiopia there are black Jews. Satisfied, she turns to Lola and asks her if she is Jewish (though, tellingly, not whether she is black). Lola shrugs off the question by saying that her mother is a Christian (she says nothing about her own religious identity). In this exchange, far from representing the Caribbean as exotically different or racially other, Lola embodies an ethnically neutral idea of France. Félix's and Jamal's identities are, by contrast, more clearly defined, both for themselves and, we may surmise, for the French audience, given that, at least for the past century, Muslim and Jewish religious and cultural identity have tended to arouse more visceral reactions than differences of skin color.

In Search of an Identity (Crisis): *L'Autre qui danse*

Suzanne Dracius-Pinalie's 1989 novel *L'Autre qui danse* [*The Other Who Dances*] is one of several recent narratives in which

Antillean migration is associated with an identity crisis bordering on pathology. Other examples of this psychological approach are Tony Delsham's recent *Négropolitains et euro-black*s [*Negropolitans and Euro-Blacks*], in which the female protagonist, Corinne, is literally schizophrenic, and his earlier *Xavier ou le drame d'un émigré antillais* [*Xavier, or The Drama of an Antillean Emigrant*]. In Dracius-Pinalie's novel, the protagonist, Rehvana, is a young Martinican woman who has grown up in Paris. In the first part of the narrative she rejects her family's mantra of assimilation and joins a gang of disaffected Antilleans who dub themselves "*les Ebonis vrais fils d'Agar* [Ebonies, the true sons of Hagar]." For the gang members, being black is synonymous with being African. They adopt African forenames, embrace what they perceive to be African mores (particularly in relation to gender and sexuality), and plot acts of violence against state institutions. Rehvana, who is self-conscious about her light skin, subjugates herself to the gang and drops out only when she is nearly killed in a violent incident. Having broken off a masochistic relationship with the gang's macho leader, Abdoulaye, in the second half of the novel she falls into the arms of another macho Antillean, with whom she leaves Paris and heads to Martinique. After giving birth to a daughter, Rehvana lives in isolation in a run-down house, subject to the whims and violent assaults of her companion. During this ordeal she immerses herself in the folklore of the island, believing that it will magically renew her spiritual connection to the land of her birth:

> *Depuis son retour en Martinique Rehvana avait consciemment cultivé cette foi aveugle et cette crédulité forcée, car elle voyait là comme l'essence de l'âme antillaise; elle leur prêtait le pouvoir de tisser un lien avec ses racines atrophiées, de renouer l'unité rompue*. [Since her return to Martinique Rehvana had consciously cultivated that blind faith and forced credulity which she saw as the essence of the Antillean soul; she attributed to them the power to reconnect her with her atrophied roots, to restore the broken unity.] (Dracius-Pinalie 102)

Finally forced to abandon this self-exoticizing quest, Rehvana returns to Paris, where, unable to ask for help, she starves to death in an abandoned apartment.

The two parts of the novel revisit concerns that have been recurrent themes of Antillean writing: the project of renewing ties with Africa, embraced by Aimé Césaire and explored more skeptically in later novels by Maryse Condé (*Une Saison; Hérémakhonon*) and Myriam Warner-Vieyra (*Juletane*), and the dream of returning home to the warmth and wisdom of the Antilles that is given voice in some of Gisèle Pineau's novels (e.g., *Papillon; L'Exil*). In *L'Autre*

qui danse both dreams fail, and the protagonist does not come any closer to understanding what, for her, it means to be an Antillean. In an eloquent reading of the novel, Françoise Lionnet argues that Rehvana's personal suffering, like that of many postcolonial heroines, needs to be read as a translation of the historical burdens of slavery and colonial dependency into psychological complexes of abjection and self-loathing (91–2). I do not disagree with this interpretation, which offers an essential framework for reading a narrative that might otherwise seem excessively melodramatic, but I want to suggest that the reverse is also true: in other words, to give voice to the identity crisis associated with Antillean *métissage*, Dracius-Pinalie harnesses it to gendered psychological issues, such as subservience and negative body image, that have a more developed narrative arc. A transfer of this nature is, in fact, suggested by the author in an exchange with the critic Susanne Rinne (370). As in the case of *Métisse* and *Papillon dans la cité*, a relational principle is at work here. Dracius-Pinalie draws not on another ethnicity but on another category of identity, gender, to flesh out her portrait of the identity crisis suffered by some *domiens*.

The few critics who have written on this novel have noted that Dracius-Pinalie goes out of her way to contrast Rehvana with her older sister, Matildana, a successful Sorbonne student who is poised and self-assured and who seems to be free of the complexes that afflict her sibling. Through this contrast Dracius-Pinalie steers clear of the implication that all Antillean migrants suffer from an acute identity crisis. For some critics, Matildana exemplifies the hybrid Antillean/metropolitan identity that Rehvana is unable to inhabit (e.g., Rinne 364–5). One basis for this reading is that at the end of the novel, Matildana broadens the range of her university studies to include both Creole and classics, boldly combining Caribbean and metropolitan traditions. While this is accurate, it is also significant that, in order to pursue this double *cursus*, Matildana has to move back to Fort-de-France: Creole studies are apparently not available to her in Paris. The problem facing Matildana is, however, not simply the lack of courses but, more fundamentally, the site-specific, regional nature of Creole language and culture and, by extension, of the *créolité* movement that has sought to revitalize them. Interestingly, in her conversation with Rinne, Dracius-Pinalie remarks that she would probably never have dared to write a novel if she had not herself returned to Martinique (Rinne 369). She might have added that "return" is a path well trodden by Antillean writers, who, intimidated or alienated by the metropolitan literary establishment, have often turned to their native islands for confidence and inspiration.

Peripheral Vision: *J'ai pas sommeil*

The last work that I will consider here, and the most far-reaching in its implications, is the 1994 film *J'ai pas sommeil* [*I Can't Sleep*] by Claire Denis, a filmmaker raised in colonial Cameroon who, for the last decade and a half, has explored the colonial history and postcolonial diversity of France in a series of controversial films. Denis's practice can perhaps best be understood as an example of the oppositional exercise that Rosello calls "declining the stereotype": responding to stereotypes about race and gender not by contesting them, or by countering with more accurate representations, but by pushing received ideas to their logical limits and exposing their cultural grammar (Rosello, *Declining*). Denis's 1990 film *S'en fout la mort* [*No Fear, No Die*], for example, features two black protagonists involved in an illegal underground activity—cock-fighting—that is widely associated with superstition and sacrifice. In *J'ai pas Sommeil*, Denis goes a step further by building a film around the figure of a gay black man who also happens to be a serial killer.

The film is loosely based on the true story of "granny killers" Thierry Paulin and Jean-Thierry Mathurin, respectively from Martinique and Guyana, who in the mid-1980s robbed and murdered twenty-one elderly women in their Paris apartments. In the film, Paulin becomes Camille, a transvestite cabaret performer from Martinique who, with his white lover, strangles and robs elderly women, apparently to support his bohemian lifestyle. *J'ai pas sommeil*, however, is not really a film "about" serial killers. There is almost no attempt to psychologize Camille or to explain why, beyond the obvious material motives, he and his boyfriend do what they do. Though we may be inclined to seek an explanation for Camille's brutality in his marginal position as a gay black man, the film never directly makes this connection. In the terms laid out by Rosello, there is, rather, something of a tease going on here: the audience is both invited and disinvited to draw a conclusion grounded in social stereotypes. As this detachment from psychological analysis suggests, the "murder plot" is less the central narrative of the film than a connecting element, a storyline that gathers together several fragmentary scenes of life in contemporary Paris. In this collage, characters interact without knowing one another, unaware of and to some extent indifferent to one another's secrets. Everyone is in some respect an outsider, excluded but also sheltered by the anonymity of the city. Formal de-centering—the absence of a primary plot that relates the experience of a fully fledged character—in effect corresponds to cultural and spatial de-centering associated with global migration and urban sprawl.

In the opening sequence of the film, Paris is "opened" to the outside (starting with its own sprawling outskirts) through a series of

traveling shots of the *périphérique*, the ring-road that encircles Paris and connects the inner city to national and international highways. In this sequence, viewers are introduced to Daiga, a young Lithuanian woman arriving in Paris by car to pursue a career as an actress. In the closing sequence of the film Daiga, having failed to realize this dream, undertakes her journey in reverse, and we see her packing up her car and leaving the city. These sequences constitute a loose frame as a result of which Paris is seen, at key intervals, from the viewpoint of an outsider, an illegal immigrant whose French is broken and who can qualify only for menial jobs. One effect of this framing is, I would suggest, to make Camille, the black transvestite, appear as a relative insider, a native French citizen well versed in the ways of the capital. Handsome, exotic, and dressed "to kill," Camille seems to be performing even when he is not on stage. It is, in fact, his very visibility that ensures that his "other" life as a "granny-killer" remains unseen, hidden in plain sight. One foundation for this paradoxical convergence of visibility and invisibility is, I suggest, Camille's ambiguous status as a French Antillean, a citizen whose difference is at once visible and, for all official purposes, nonexistent.

The representation of Camille as a "stranger in our midst" is reinforced by the fact that he is a member of a large and, in many ways, close-knit Antillean family. Camille's brother Théo is a jazz musician who also performs at night, usually in dimly lit subterranean clubs. Unlike Camille, however, Théo also has a day job, delivering and installing furniture for an under-the-counter business. In one scene, a middle-class customer tries to underpay Théo for shelving he has delivered to her apartment, opportunistically bringing up the fact that the shelves are "black market" goods. Racism hovers just below the surface of her speech, which smugly implies a correlation between blackness and illegality. As this episode illustrates, though Théo's life is in many ways different from Camille's, in both cases themes of visibility and invisibility, legality and subterraneity, are central to the ways in which others perceive them and in which they choose to present themselves. In another important scene, Camille and Théo attend a birthday party for their mother. Despite simmering family tensions, the gathering conveys warmth and deep mutual affection. Camille's family appears perfectly ordinary, and as a result it seems a stretch to connect Camille's crimes to a tragic or neglectful upbringing. This disconnect is reinforced in a scene near the end of the film in which, following Camille's arrest, his mother visits him at the police station. Shocked and unable to absorb the fact that the beloved son whom she has brought up by a strict code of values is responsible for a string of brutal crimes, she expresses her disavowal by pummeling him with her fists. In this scene an ordinary, loving mother unexpectedly finds her family at the center of media attention. Alongside the obvious existential questions raised by this

turn of events (Do we really know anyone? What makes some people capable of murder?) is a secondary social dimension, the sudden visibility of a respectable Antillean family that had previously passed unnoticed in the French capital.

But Claire Denis's concern in *J'ai pas sommeil*, as in several of her other films, is not just to take a nuanced and unsentimental look at the lives of postcolonial subjects in France but, rather, in a more ambitious manner, to revise conceptions of the cultural matrix within which these identities and predicaments are presumed to exist. As we have seen, the psychological dimension evoked by the serial-killer plot is downplayed in favor of non-narrative modes of representation that emphasize discontinuity, open boundaries, and the absence of a social whole. If *J'ai pas sommeil* can be said to be "about" anything, it is the parallel lives, missed connections, random encounters, and unreadable signs that define contemporary urban environments. This de-centered, transnational web is pushed to the fore as the unstable context within which we might begin to rethink identity and cultural difference in more fluid, less binaristic terms.

Antillean Invisibility and the French/Francophone Polarity

Above I suggest that the inhibition that attends the representation of Antilleans living in the metropole is a symptom of wider political and philosophical structures and that it reflects the continuing influence of a model of culture that emphasizes differences between nations while minimizing heterogeneity within France. In literary studies this polarity is manifested in the deployment of the category of "francophone literature" to denote literature written in French by writers from the former colonies and to distinguish it (for various purposes) from the "French literature" produced in France. Part concept, part cultural program, *francophonie* originated in the neocolonial and centralizing aspiration of maintaining economic and political ties between France and its former colonies on the basis of their common language. Though the meaning of *francophonie* subsequently branched, such that, starting in North American academia, it came also to denote the de-centralization of French in the writing of African, Caribbean, and Asian authors, the term "francophone literature" still often denotes "non-French" writing in French, and, as such, it perpetuates a polarized schema that accounts neither for the hybridizing effects of postcolonial immigration nor for the peripheral status of the overseas departments. As a result, "francophone" writers are still frequently approached as African, Asian, Caribbean, or Canadian French-speakers, or as French-speaking exponents of the cultural specificity of Africa, Canada, or the Caribbean, even when they happen to live in London or New York. The critical interest

in nomads, exiles, and migrants—people who cross national borders and expose the contingency of national literary histories—that has been an important dimension of anglophone postcolonial studies has been far less evident in the study of francophone postcoloniality. As the Tunisian writer/essayist Abdelwahab Meddeb comments in an essay that contrasts *francophonie* and postcolonialism, "*Dans le cadre de la francophonie on continue à fonctionner dans le topos centre / périphérie . . .* [Within the framework of *francophonie* we are still ruled by the center/periphery topos]," whereas, by contrast, "*la notion de postcolonialisme implique la destitution du centre, l'idée même de centre se trouve dissoute* [the notion of postcolonialism implies the destitution of the center; the very idea of the center is dismantled]" (30).[31] *Francophonie* and postcolonialism are, of course, less monolithic and less static than Meddeb's account implies, and in recent years critics including Françoise Lionnet and Mireille Rosello have begun to break down this grid through their readings of writers such as Françoise Ega and Suzanne Dracius-Pinalie (see Rosello, *Infiltrating*). As yet, however, only a handful of French Caribbean writers (most of them women) have produced work that explicitly challenges the French/Francophone polarity, redrawing the boundaries of national literature by foregrounding the multiplicity of internal diversity and the growing impact of transnationalism.

Notes

1. *Créolité* was launched in Paris when the authors of the *Éloge* spoke at the 1988 Festival Caraïbe of Saint-Denis. The *créolistes*' chief objective, however, has been to reclaim and promulgate a cultural and linguistic heritage that evolved in the Caribbean, rather than to celebrate "creolization" in metropolitan France in the wake of migration.

2. France's territories in the Caribbean, collectively known as the Antilles françaises, are Martinique, Guadeloupe, Saint-Martin, and Saint-Barthélemy. Since 1946 Martinique and Guadeloupe have been administrative departments of France. The islands of Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy fall under the administrative umbrella of Guadeloupe. The population of Martinique, according to the last official survey conducted in 1999 by the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE, "L'Île"), is approximately 380,000; the population of Guadeloupe is approximately 430,000. For administrative purposes, the French Antilles are often grouped with the department of French Guyana (population 157,000). Together these departments constitute the *départements français d'Amérique* ("French departments of the Americas," or DFA). In many respects the history and political and administrative status of the French Antilles also coincide with those of La Réunion in the Indian Ocean, also made a department of France in 1946. Collectively, these departments are known as the *départements d'outre-mer* ("overseas departments," or DOM). Since 2003 they have all had a dual status as administrative regions and departments. In the less than fifty years since "departmentalization" there has been a fifteen-fold rise in the percentage of *domiens* residing in the metropole. According to statistics published by INSEE in 2002, in 1952 a mere 16,000 people born in Martinique and Guadeloupe lived in metropolitan France. In 1962 the number had risen to 38,000, and in 1982, following a fifteen-year period during which migration was actively encouraged by a government program, it had reached 183,000. As noted in the text of this essay, the main causes of migration were rising population in the Caribbean—which, combined with the final collapse of the plantation economy—led to high unemployment, and strong demand for labor in the metropole. The rate of migration slowed dramatically during the 1990s. This decline reflects a number of factors, including disillusionment about work

opportunities in the metropole, experiences of racism and discrimination, resistance to French assimilationism, and the growing phenomenon of *retours-retraites*, the return of retirees who left the Caribbean to work in metropolitan France in the 1960s and 1970s. The official count of people born in the Antilles residing in the metropole today stands at 212,000 (INSEE, "L'Île" 4). This figure does not include children born in the metropole to families originating in the Antilles. Estimates of the total metropolitan population of Antillean descent range from 337,000 (Beriss, *Black Skins* xiii) to half a million. The variation among these estimates reflects differences in how broadly "Antillean" is defined.

3. In French, "Antilles" and "Antillean" (*antillais*) are used more widely than "Caribbean."

4. As Claude-Valentin Marie writes, "*Ce sujet, resté longtemps un tabou politique . . . est aussi demeuré . . . pour l'essentiel, absent des préoccupations du milieu de la recherche jusqu'à une époque récente* [This subject, long a political taboo . . . was also, until very recently, essentially absent from the preoccupations of researchers]" ("Populations" 191). Some of the principal studies devoted specifically to Antillean migration and migrant communities are Anselin; Beriss, Black Skins; Domenach and Picouet; Marie, "Antillais," "Populations"; Tardieu. Migration is also discussed in Constant and Daniel.

5. The term *beur* is derived from a form of French slang known as *le verlan*, in which syllables are inverted. In *verlan*, *beur* is the inversion of *arabe*. At first a somewhat derogatory term, it was rapidly adopted by many of the people it designated. In recent years, some Franco-Maghrebians have rejected the label, but it remains widely used in literature, journalism, and academic discourse.

6. Legislation introduced in 1993 by the right-wing interior minister Charles Pasqua made naturalization more difficult for the children of immigrants, drastically reduced the number of temporary residence visas available to Third World applicants, facilitated identity checks, and simplified deportation procedures.

7. Marie also presents the staggering statistic that in 1990 one-half of all Antillean-born French citizens aged between thirty and forty lived in metropolitan France.

8. Anselin's formulation plays on the designation of the Haitian diaspora in the United States and Canada as Haiti's "tenth Department."

9. As French citizens, Antilleans qualify for public-sector jobs that are not open to foreign workers.

10. In her novel *Lettres à une noire: récit antillais* (discussed in a subsequent section), Françoise Ega directly compares the recruitment of Antillean women as cleaners and nannies with the slave trade (35).

11. Zouk was created in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the Paris-based group Kassav.

12. The French expression literally signifies something stronger, along the lines of "coming from immigration."

13. The *Senatus Consultus* of 1865 allowed Muslim Algerians to naturalize if they were willing to give up not, as is sometimes stated, their faith but their personal status as defined by the Qur'an and to adhere instead to the French Civil Code. This would heave entailed, among other concessions, adhering to French laws on marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Only a tiny minority of Muslim Algerians proved willing to accept this exchange.

14. To clarify: I do not, of course, mean that race really does exist naturally and that the French have failed to concede this; what I mean is that somatic differences do sometimes influence how institutions and individuals act, even though such influence is denied.

15. Condé does not really address the correlation between the high profile of the Maghrebian community in film, literature, and music and its extreme social adversity, or the fact that, as Muslims, Maghrebians encounter forms of prejudice that did not affect Italian and Spanish immigrants.

16. On this asymmetry see my book *Foreign Bodies: Gender, Language and Culture in French Orientalism*.

17. In his essay "Antillais et Africains," Fanon diagnoses the tendency toward identification in the conceptualization of Antillean identity. He proposes that having once succumbed to "*la grande erreur blanche* [the great white error]," Antilleans of his generation were succumbing to a new mystification, "*le grand mirage noir* [the great black mirage]" propagated since the 1930s by the négritude movement (269). Given his lucidity about comparative identities, it is particularly revealing that his own revolutionary potential was unleashed in the context of the Algerian struggle against France.

18. Consider, for example, the celebration of 2003 as the *année de l'Algérie en France* ("the year of Algeria in France") at the joint initiative of the French and Algerian governments.

19. David Beriss cites a speech made by President Jacques Chirac before dignitaries at the Palais de l'Élysée on this anniversary. In his remarks, Chirac offended black Antilleans by claiming that France abolished slavery of its own accord in 1794, and again in 1848, and by suggesting that Napoleon's army met with only weak resistance when it moved to reestablish slavery in 1802. Such ill-informed claims not only make light of the resistance movement led by Louis Delgrès in Guadeloupe but also erase from consciousness France's ultimate defeat in Haiti (Beriss, *Black Skins* 52). On the very different kinds of commemoration launched in metropolitan France and in Martinique and Guadeloupe, see Reinhardt.

20. CM98 has also opposed what it sees as the undemocratic choice by the Comité de la mémoire de l'esclavage of 10 May rather than 23 May as the date for the annual remembrance of slavery.

21. Njami is based in French-speaking Switzerland.

22. See, for example, Mahmood Mamdani's recent *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, a wide-ranging critique of the tendency of American foreign policy to substitute cultural for political analysis, as well as Arjun Appadurai's "Global Ethnoscapes" and Lila Abu-Lughod's "Writing Against Culture."

23. In his seminal study *La France et ses étrangers*, Patrick Weil writes that after World War II, immigration policy was annexed to the politics of decolonization, particularly the "Algerian problem" (64). However, Weil never refers to the departmentalization of the DOM-TOM or to the aggressive recruitment of *domiens*, alongside workers from the Maghreb, during the prosperous post-war years. In a passing reference, he notes that in the 1970s housing quotas designed to restrict the number of Maghrebians to a *seuil de tolérance* ("threshold of tolerance"), generally 10%, also included "*Français de couleur*" from the DOM (272), but he does not proceed to the conclusion that, in this and other respects, the experience of Antilleans has paralleled, and indeed been interwoven with, that of North African immigrants. In Michèle Tribalat's *De l'immigration à l'assimilation*, a report on the comprehensive survey of the economic, social, and cultural position of immigrants and their descendants undertaken by a research team from the Institut national d'études démographiques (INED) in partnership with INSEE, the experience of immigrants is measured against that of a control group of so-called "*Français de souche*" ("French of old stock"). One of several problems raised by this category is the status of Antilleans, legally *Français de souche* but historically more closely aligned with immigrants. Presumably no black French natives were included in the control group.

24. Wieviorka notes that *domiens*, like gypsies, are often assimilated with immigrants (155), but, with the exception of one section devoted to conflicts in Cergy, a new town in the Parisian suburbs (197–8), he has little to say about how their experiences resemble or differ from those of other groups subject to prejudice, or about how racism directed toward them might alter perceptions of the nature of racial prejudice in France. In several passages Wieviorka uses the word "*noirs*" in an undifferentiated way, as do many of the people his group interviews, but no implications are drawn from this usage.

25. On intrastate diasporas see Tölölyan.

26. On the non-correspondence of integration and immigration see Dewitte, "L'Immigration": "*l'exemple des Antillais et de tous les originaires des DOM-TOM montre que l'intégration est un fait social qui ne concerne pas que les étrangers* [the example of the Antilleans, and of all natives of the DOM-TOM, shows that integration is a social issue that does not concern foreigners alone]" (8).

27. The case of Maximin, author of acclaimed novels including *Isolé soleil* (1981), is slightly different, to the extent that his whole family moved to Paris in 1960, at the dawn of the era of large-scale Antillean migration.

28. As Rosello notes, epistolary address is expanded here in a rather different way than in works such as Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*. Ega's choice of an illiterate addressee underscores the problematic relation of literature, including writing about poverty and labor, to reading, viewed as an act contingent on learning and leisure (Rosello 72).

29. In an essay titled "Écrire en tant que noire [Writing as a black woman]" published in the volume *Penser la créolité*, Pineau cites her own experience of growing up in a Paris suburb to explain why her literary focus diverges from the emphasis on cultural heritage advocated by the *créolistes*: "*La peau noire, laide, sale, sauvage est repoussante aux yeux des Blancs de mon enfance. Contrairement aux écrivains créolistes de ma génération, je n'ai pas vécu une enfance antillaise sous les tropiques. J'ai connu la cité, ses alignements d'immeubles gris, la froidure des hivers de France . . . et l'indicible sentiment d'être exclue, inadaptée, déplacée dans cet environnement blanc-carré-policé* [Black skin, ugly, dirty, savage, was repulsive in the eyes of the whites of my childhood. Unlike the *créoliste* writers of my generation, I did not have an Antillean childhood under the tropics. My reality was the city, its rows of grey highrises, the cold winters of France . . . and the unspeakable feeling of being excluded, unfit, out of place in this white-square-police-controlled world]" (289).

30. This pairing is inverted in Claire Denis's 1990 film *S'en fout la mort*. Here the West African protagonist is open and easygoing, whereas the Antillean character is brooding and mysterious, immersed in the Caribbean lore of Voodoo and cock-fighting. This inversion bespeaks a more complex meditation on identity and difference in contemporary France (per my reading of Denis's *J'ai pas sommeil*).

31. In this essay Meddeb uses these two terms rather loosely. He does not specify, for instance, whether he his primarily referring to *francophonie* as a state-sponsored program or as a scholarly practice, nor does he say whether he would group North American francophone studies with French scholarship.

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