



RACE ON **DISPLAY**

in 20th- and 21st-
Century France

Katelyn E. Knox

Contemporary French and Francophone Cultures

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KATELYN E. KNOX

Race on Display
in 20th- and 21st-Century France

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Note on Translations

Published English translations of material that originally appeared in French have been given where these were available. Otherwise, translations are my own. In some places, the meaning of the original French seemed self-evident, or its significance critical. In these instances, I retain the original French and use footnotes to explain the terms.

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Note on Companion Website: Full examples of all music videos analyzed in this book can be found on this book’s companion website: <http://www.raceondisplayin20thand21stcenturyfrance.com>.

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Introduction

‘Exhibit B’ on Display

Though a performance art piece titled ‘Exhibit B’ had opened to widespread acclaim in Avignon in 2013—a reception characteristic of its multi-year run in many European cities—its arrival in Paris was quite different. Not only did a group calling itself ‘Contre Exhibit B’ (‘Against Exhibit B’), led by French popular musician Bams, actively call for the show’s closure, but it also boycotted the event and led a public protest that shut down its opening night.¹ Over 250 French riot police guarded the show on subsequent evenings, aided by temporary metal fencing. The controversy playing out in the news and in social media only continued to increase, even after ‘Exhibit B’ left Paris.²

Created and directed by South African artist Brett Bailey, ‘Exhibit B’ comprises a series of twelve scenes, each of which takes up an entire room. Spectators enter each room alone and there they encounter African or black ‘specimens’. The scenes call to mind historical moments when African bodies were put on display for the gaze of a European population—such as museum or ethnographic exhibitions (also known as ‘human zoos’) at world’s fairs.³ Other tableaux draw connections between historical moments and the present day. For instance, in one room the spectator encounters a black laborer sitting on a chair behind a chain-link fence. The sign on the fence reassures the visitor that ‘the blacks have been fed’. In another, a black body is staged on a row of airplane seats, his feet bound, arms zip-tied to the armrests, and mouth taped shut. These two scenes clearly suggest that, though the historical contexts are quite different, there are nevertheless connections between how colonial powers staged colonized bodies and how a variety of

structures—such as the news media or cultural marketplaces—present racial and ethnic minority bodies today.

The scenes' composition imitate museum-style dioramas so well that many spectators do not initially realize that the 'specimens' they gaze upon might be anything other than wax figures or mannequins—that is, until the 'specimens' on display lock gazes with them and hold it the entire time they are in the room. Suddenly realizing that they and their gaze are objects of scrutiny unseats spectators from their previously unexamined role as gazer, raising a myriad questions: What legitimates their gaze? Why had they previously felt comfortable looking on this scene when they thought the people were inanimate objects? What forces govern who is able to gaze and who is positioned as the object of the gaze?

French critiques of 'Exhibit B' center around two main concerns. First, opponents claim that Bailey's exhibit may be laudable, but he, as a white South African artist, is nevertheless complicit in reproducing the same power dynamics his piece seeks to contest.⁴ Second, and more importantly, critics point out that the exhibit neither stages those responsible for this violence nor those moments when black individuals took an active role in protesting their objectification. John Mullen provocatively asserts, 'It shows a lie [...]. It shows the victims without the perpetrators. The black victims are silent, immobile and fetishized, while the colonialists are absent'.⁵ What is more, CRAN (le Conseil représentatif des associations noires de France; the Representative Council of France's Black Associations) suggests that this staging not only characterizes black bodies as passive, historical victims, but also reinforces the idea that white agents are responsible for saving them:

En montrant de la sorte les victimes du racisme, des esclaves d'autrefois aux sans-papiers d'aujourd'hui en passant par les Africains dans les zoos humains, l'artiste donne l'impression que de tous temps, les Noirs n'ont jamais été que des êtres passifs, spectateurs endoloris de leur propre misère, endurent en silence, subissant sans murmure, attendant sans mot dire que le 'grand blanc' vienne enfin les sortir de leur triste condition.⁶

(By showing racism's victims in this way, from the slaves of the past to today's illegal immigrants by way of Africans in human zoos, the artist gives the impression that Blacks have never been anything but passive beings, pained spectators of their own misery, enduring in silence, suffering without even the slightest whisper, waiting without speaking a single word until the 'great white man' finally came to release them from their sorry condition.)

In the eyes of these critics, then, 'Exhibit B' merely perpetuates the same narratives of black victimhood and objectification that the performance seeks to contest.

Yet other scholars, and even the performers themselves, who stand immobile for hours and lock gazes with each and every visitor who passes before them, see it differently. Despite the piece's potential risks, the performers maintain that to understand 'Exhibit B' as a performance critiquing or even uncritically reproducing the historical victimization of black bodies is to miss its larger focal point: the gaze itself. By staring back at their spectators, the performers contend, they lay bare the more insidious and less overt forces that govern who can gaze upon whom, when, and how. Their collective statement affirms:

At first glance at the materials, it is easy to assume that we are nothing but objects, repeating the worst of the racist and dehumanising aspects of the human zoos referred to in the petition(s) to cancel the exhibition.

Standing, exhibited in this manner, we can state explicitly that we are not objects during the exhibition. We are human, even more so when performing.⁷

In fact, as Bailey has underscored in interviews, in 'Exhibit B' the spectator is part of the show alongside everything contained in each room. 'The installation', he asserts, 'is not about the cultural or anatomical difference between the colonial subject and the spectator; it is about the relationship between the two. It is about looking and being looked at. Both performer and spectator are contained within the frame'.⁸ 'Exhibit B' also formalizes this idea of scrutinizing the gaze itself by listing 'spectator' among the 'materials used' on each room's placard. In so doing, 'Exhibit B' implicates the spectator within each scene, encouraging him or her to take a step back and to examine his or her previously unexamined position as viewer.

In this way, 'Exhibit B' engages issues regarding sight and gazing that have a long philosophical tradition and whose political implications have been theorized in realms as disparate as feminist theory, postcolonial theory, and psychoanalysis, to name but three.⁹ I am most concerned with the power and privilege associated with moments when collectivities figuratively gaze upon each other. However, gazing begins as an individual biological and social experience in early childhood. It is a process through which children develop notions of selfhood and otherness. During what Jacques Lacan has termed the 'mirror stage', for instance, the child sees him or herself in his or her mother's arms

and understands him or herself as an object distinct from others—one that can also be subject to the gaze.¹⁰ These early moments of subjectivity formation go hand-in-hand with objectification— notions that both Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault explored in different yet interrelated ways. Sartre, for instance, considered the power dynamics that characterized a one-way gaze through a keyhole, but also how these dynamics shifted when the gazer realized that he could be *seen in the act of seeing*. For him, knowing that he could be caught gazing (whether or not this came to pass) reinforced his status of object in the eyes of the other.¹¹ Foucault opened up this interpersonal interaction to consider how the gaze (and the related notion of ‘surveillance’) functions on a collective level. He underscored how select (privileged) individuals consolidate their power by using discourses and systems of surveillance to multiply the gaze, which, when subsequently internalized by the masses, allows the select few to maintain their positions of power over the many, even in the former’s physical absence.¹² Issues of gazing, as ‘Exhibit B’ makes manifest, are bound up in notions of power and authority.

For postcolonial and feminist theorists, focus on the power that privileged individuals can maintain over the many resonates with the way white (European) heteronormative masculinity often serves as the default gazing subject position. What is more, for these scholars, Sartre’s temporary discomfort indicates his position of privilege, which they do not share; prior to being seen through the keyhole, Sartre had not often discovered himself to be the ‘other’ in another’s gaze. Marginalized groups, on the other hand, have famously theorized their subjectivity as one that permanently internalizes one’s status as an object of others’ gazes. For W. E. B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon, racial minorities’ self-awareness is filtered through other eyes, whether described as ‘double consciousness’ (Du Bois) or ‘seeing oneself in the third person’ (Fanon).¹³ As feminist scholars such as Laura Mulvey have proposed, cinema betrays a ‘male gaze’, portraying women as objects to be consumed.¹⁴ These dynamics also function on collective levels: even if, as Edward Said has suggested, imperial powers’ way of looking on their others (‘Orientalism’) reveals more about European visions of alterity than about the populations they purportedly depict, it nevertheless constructs an image which those populations must ultimately confront.¹⁵ Similarly, because the gaze inherently erects unequal power dynamics, it also provokes crises about the knowledge created based on observation, which is particularly evident in perennial discussions regarding ethnographic methodologies.¹⁶

Populations deemed to be white, heteronormative, masculine Europe's 'others' never experience life outside of objectification.

Part of the force of 'Exhibit B', then, is the way it introduces its spectators to this position of being seen as an object in others' eyes. It draws attention to the figurative keyhole of privilege through which the spectators had comfortably looked. French sociologist Éric Fassin describes how 'Exhibit B' not only demands that its viewer recognize the humanity of those often pegged as 'others' in France, but, more importantly, it also causes its spectators to discover their own racial positionality and its relationship to power and privilege:

le public d'Avignon se découvre blanc. Surtout, le regard se renverse: le spectateur n'est pas voyeur, car il est vu. Immobiles, ces hommes et ces femmes nous regardent—même le gisant. Leurs yeux nous suivent, et c'est nous qui finissons par les baisser. Avec ce dispositif, on n'est pas au zoo; on est *dans* le 'zoo humain'.¹⁷

(the Avignon public discovers itself to be white. Above all, the gaze is reversed: the spectator is not the gazer, because he is seen. Motionless, these men and women look at us—even the one playing the role of a recumbent effigy. Their eyes follow us, and it is we who end up lowering our own. With this configuration, we're not at the zoo, we're *in* the 'human zoo'.)

Fassin celebrates the power of 'Exhibit B' to make whiteness—which, as whiteness studies scholars have pointed out, often passes for the 'human norm'¹⁸—visible, yet his assessment implicitly equates 'whiteness', 'the Avignon public', 'the spectator', and 'we/us'. Though it might be true that the show's spectators are, for the most part, white, it is certainly not the case for all spectators. These latent assumptions, then, also confirm the urgent need for the very work 'Exhibit B does': a reflexive stance on the gaze itself, and its relationship to race, power, and privilege.

In addition to finding himself in the position of being the object of another person's gaze, Fassin's description also points out another privilege some of the 'Exhibit B' spectators might take for granted: having to question neither the existence of their gaze nor the underlying forces that legitimize it. In her study of ethnographic spectacles, Fatimah Rony reveals that those in positions of privilege—that is, those who select what to put on display—rarely acknowledge that their 'other' also has a gaze, until the 'other' asserts it through what bell hooks has termed an 'oppositional gaze', a collective refusal of the injunction on looking. She writes, 'by courageously looking, we defiantly declared:

“Not only will I stare. I want my look to change reality”.¹⁹ The ‘oppositional gaze’ inverts Sartre’s keyhole experience: for Sartre, being caught gazing is a profoundly traumatic experience; for those too often denied a gaze, the goal is not just to be caught seeing, but to *make oneself seen seeing*.

Yet the name ‘oppositional’ itself draws attention to a potential danger of such a gesture: namely that any act of ‘looking back’ might reproduce the rigid binary it ultimately seeks to contest.²⁰ Asserting an ‘oppositional gaze’, in other words, might trap both parties in a perpetual staring contest from which no one will ever emerge victorious. Yet for hooks and other race theorists such as George Yancy, these acts of ‘looking back’ (or, as Yancy puts it, developing a ‘black counter-gaze’)²¹ are not about binary opposition, but rather about pluralism. The ‘oppositional’ and ‘black counter-gazes’ become two possible perspectives among many. Their goal is not to replace those in power with another privileged position, but rather to expose how what often passes for universal (white, abled, heteronormative masculinity) is but one particularism in disguise.²² Ultimately, the works I analyze in this book move toward this pluralism by proposing their own ‘oppositional’ and ‘counter’ gazes. In my view, their acts of ‘looking back’ (both upon those who look as well as upon the gaze and its underlying power dynamics) open up essential dialogs and, to reprise hooks’s citation above, ‘change reality’ in productive and lasting ways. By pluralizing the field of gazes, they effectively show that what has often passed as ‘universal reality’ is but one of many possible gazes.

‘Exhibit B’ also lays bare another dimension of privilege relating to the gaze: the ability to control when and how to make oneself visible in both literal and figurative senses. Postcolonial theorists as well as authors and artists have pointed out how this paradox of ‘visible invisibility’ characterize racial and ethnic minorities’ experiences. Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952) likened the dehumanized position of African Americans in pre-Civil Rights America to invisibility, and Pap Ndiaye comes to a similar conclusion regarding France’s contemporary minority populations: ‘les minorités *visibles* ont longtemps été *invisibles* dans l’espace public français’ (*visible* minorities have for a long while been *invisible* in French public space).²³ For theorists, artists, and activists such as Fanon, Léonora Miano, and the group Les Indigènes de la République (The Natives of the Republic), minoritized populations can and must take measures to gain ‘recognition’—a move that allows them control over the terms of their own display.²⁴

Seen in this light, ‘Exhibit B’ also reveals another dimension of power and privilege associated with controlling display: not only can those with power and privilege define when and how to display themselves and others, they can also use their power to hide this very privilege from view. In other words, those in positions of power can hide from view what Stuart Hall terms ‘inferential racism’: ‘those apparently naturalised representations of events and situations relating to race, whether “factual” or “fictional”, which have racist premises and propositions inscribed in them as a set of *unquestioned assumptions*’.²⁵ Two French examples illustrate the machinations of this process: the display of human remains in France’s museums (notably the case of the remains of Saartjie Baartman, also called the ‘Hottentot Venus’) and the way the histories of France’s ethnographic exhibitions themselves have been afforded space in the French public landscape (or not). Both during her lifetime and after her death, Baartman was an object of scientific and public curiosity, often displayed in circuses or human zoos in Britain and France. Following her death, Georges Cuvier performed her autopsy, preserved many of her organs (including her sexual organs) in jars, and made a cast of her body. Her remains were prominently displayed at several of Paris’s museums until 1976, when they were removed from the public view, but still housed in the Musée de l’Homme.²⁶ While removing her remains from view breaks the cycle of dehumanization to which Baartman was subjected (even posthumously), doing so nevertheless allows Baartman’s dehumanization (and the gaze that perpetuated it) to escape critical scrutiny. Similarly, Paris’s contemporary landscape bears few traces of the ethnographic spectacles that invited French visitors to gaze upon its colonized others less than a century ago. This occlusion still persists today—few if any traces of these ethnographic spectacles are offered to the French public.²⁷

Finally, in the now five years during which ‘Exhibit B’ has toured the world, Bailey has made a conscious effort to bridge the gap between those seemingly faraway places and distant times represented in the tableaux and the present day. This element, too, is formalized within ‘Exhibit B’, whose final room contains both a journal where the spectator can write about his or her experiences in ‘Exhibit B’ as well as photographs and biographies of the local actors Bailey casts in each city where the performance piece runs. The performers’ biographies recount acts of racism they have personally suffered, drawing connections between the gazes they endure during their performance and the ones they face in their everyday lives. Their stories suggest that the performers are no

less on display outside of 'Exhibit B'. Rather, the principal difference is that the frameworks responsible for their display outside 'Exhibit B' are more nebulous and less visible, allowing them to evade critical scrutiny. In other words, those who gaze upon them are so comfortable in their position that they fail to see their ability to gaze as a privilege. Sartre's famous keyhole has become one-way glass, and those on the gazing side can stare as much as they like without fear of being seen in return.²⁸

In exploring the connections between the way racialized bodies were staged at world's fairs (which I term 'institutional spectacles') and the much more nebulous and less overt way of looking which the 'Exhibit B' performers describe experiencing on a daily basis (which I term 'institutionalized spectacularism'), 'Exhibit B' joins the much larger corpus of francophone literature, music, fashion, and dance that I analyze in this book. Each of the works I have selected for study investigates the relationship between the gaze, display, and notions of race and national identity in postcolonial France. Like 'Exhibit B', they render visible those invisible walls and the associated privileges that still govern how racial and ethnic minority populations are viewed. These works assert their own 'oppositional' or 'counter-' gaze on their audience while simultaneously pointing up the complex risks and stakes associated with self-representation. What is more, the authors and artists analyzed in this book also grapple with their own complicity in profiting from a culture that posits racial and ethnic minorities as exotic spectacles.

I contend that colonial spectacles that put colonized bodies on display for a French public continue to affect the ways in which racial and ethnic minority populations are approached in contemporary France. The relationship between explicit colonial spectacles and what I term 'institutionalized spectacularism', however, is more complicated than direct correlation or even causation; rather, it is defined by connections, slippages, and fractures. In this book, I define 'institutional spectacles' as overt government-sponsored ('institutional') demonstrations or displays of race and national identity; the main example I analyze is France's 1931 Exposition coloniale. 'Institutionalized spectacularism', by contrast, describes a much more pervasive way of looking.

A closer look at the differences between the two expressions further clarifies their nuances. First, the distinction between 'institutional' and 'institutionalized' suggests that while the former was associated with an institution (such as the government), the latter has become so pervasive that it has become an institution in and of itself. Additionally, the suffix '-ized', which distinguishes the two terms, emphasizes the difference

in locus of control governing each. Whereas officials actively orchestrated ‘institutional spectacles’, ‘institutionalized spectacularism’ seeps passively into the collective consciousness. My notion of ‘institutionalized spectacularism’ borrows conspicuously, but distinguishes itself, from Graham Huggan’s notion of the ‘spectacularization of cultural difference’.²⁹ In particular, ‘spectacularism’ distinguishes itself from ‘spectacularization’ in its emphasis on the ways of looking, rather than the processes through which cultural differences are transformed into spectacles. Also significant to this project, the suffix ‘-ism’ that differentiates ‘spectacles’ from ‘spectacularism’ shifts the focus from the events themselves (‘spectacles’) to the culture of looking behind them (‘spectacularism’). ‘Institutional spectacles’ and ‘institutionalized spectacularism’ are not mutually exclusive; ‘institutional spectacles’ constitute one iteration of ‘institutionalized spectacularism’. The children’s comics and musical works I examine in Chapter 1, for instance, were associated with one of the most central ‘institutional spectacles’ of their time: the 1931 Exposition coloniale. As privately published works, however, they themselves are not ‘institutional spectacles’; rather, they are both a product of and themselves promote colonial ‘institutionalized spectacularism’.

My primary goal in this book is to outline how francophone authors and artists expose the central role played by ‘institutionalized spectacularism’ in constructing notions of race and national identity in France in four key realms: official historical discourse, rhetoric and news media, cultural marketplaces, and the discipline of French cultural studies. Taking up the call issued by the works I study, in *Race on Display in 20th- and 21st-Century France* I seek not to point out (simply to put on display, as it were) those typically considered France’s racial others, but rather to point out and name the ways of looking that produce racial and ethnic others. In other words, as its title suggests, *Race on Display in 20th- and 21st-Century France* considers how race and alterity were and continue to be mobilized, displayed, and hidden from view in the context of discussions of French identity. This book is not about developing theories of racial identity, but rather about considering how acts of display themselves crystallize certain notions of racial alterity and normativity in relation to national identity. Moreover, I self-consciously use the term ‘race’ in the title inclusively. All too often (and this is one of whiteness studies’ scholars’ critiques), majority races (generally white, in a European context) pass unmarked; speaking about ‘race’ is code for speaking about ‘racial and ethnic minorities’. One of

my main arguments in this book, however, is that continuing to allow whiteness to pass unexamined constitutes disciplinary ‘institutionalized spectacularism’. This book, then, is as much about the histories of how racial and ethnic minorities have been put—and put themselves—on display through various cultural vectors as it is about how whiteness has (or has not) put itself on display as a race among others, as well as the ways in which this privileged position is currently being destabilized.

As I outlined above, power and privilege come not only from one’s ability to gaze but also from one’s ability to control what is displayed. Typically, when one thinks of ‘display’ or ‘spectacle’, what comes to mind is images of publicly or privately curated events and performances, or spaces such as museum exhibits where objects are collected, categorized, and subsequently exhibited for a viewing public. In *Race on Display in 20th- and 21st-Century France*, I contend that this narrow understanding discounts equally important sites through which images of the self and the other are cultivated, such as history books, political speeches, bookstore shelves, or even university syllabi. Before outlining how the chosen francophone cultural works contest this institutionalized spectacularism, then, I first outline how it operates in the four arenas of official historical discourse, rhetoric and news media, cultural marketplaces, and the discipline of francophone cultural studies.

Of course, the risk of perpetuating imperial power dynamics also threatens to resurface through contemporary academic gazes; accordingly, bell hooks cautions that ‘non-black’ individuals must critically interrogate their own gaze in order to resist ‘simply recreat[ing] the imperial gaze—the look that seeks to dominate, subjugate, and colonize’.³⁰ It is my hope, as a non-black scholar, that turning my attention to the ways of looking that define twentieth- and twenty-first-century France will, far from reproducing this imperial gaze, expose its vestiges in order to better contest them.

Official Historical Discourse

As discussed above, dominant groups enjoy the rarely acknowledged privilege of controlling the terms of the ways they make visible both themselves and those they deem their others. This display need not be literal; in fact, throughout this book I argue that official French historical discourse constitutes one site through which institutionalized spectacularism solidifies notions of national identity and of otherness. In

France's official historical discourse, the histories of its former colonies (and current DROMs) and its racial and ethnic minority populations have been cordoned off from 'national' history. One need look no further than Pierre Nora's three-volume *Les Lieux de mémoire* for evidence. That only one of its chapters—that on 1931's Exposition coloniale—deals even remotely with questions of colonization (and those which transpired on French soil) confirms its hexagonal bias.³¹ One of the most important ways in which communities ('imagined'—as Benedict Anderson has proposed³²—or not) outline who does and who does not belong is through 'instrumentalizing a common past', as Fatima El-Tayeb has put it.³³ In France, national history is filtered through the boundaries of the *postcolonial* nation-state—a move that automatically mischaracterizes as 'foreign' those histories that occurred outside of France's contemporary borders.

What is more, if today's boundaries are projected backwards in time to construct a unified notion of national history, certain historical events are also pegged as foundational in national myths. As Gérard Noiriel has pointed out, the French Revolution serves just such a purpose in France, making it 'impossible for "foreigners" to have a place in the collective memory of the nation'.³⁴ The consequences of this historical myopia go beyond the realm of history. For instance, as the *sans-papiers* (studied in Chapter 2) have pointed out, the national identity and immigration legislative reforms passed in the 1980s and 1990s depended on ignoring the complex entanglements between France and its former colonies.

Efforts to rectify these lacunae, however, reveal how institutionalized spectacularism permeates official French historical discourse. First, movements to bring France's colonial history to the fore have been met with accusations of historical *communautarisme* and a 'concurrence victimaire'.³⁵ One of the most outspoken critics, Pascal Bruckner, has argued that giving such histories a more central place in national history serves no purpose in contemporary France beyond cultivating a sense of 'white guilt'.³⁶ Second, since the early twenty-first century, colonial history has been negotiated in part through France's legislature, principally through two 'memory laws'. In 2001, France's government recognized the history of the slave trade as a crime against humanity and provided for the creation of the Comité national pour la mémoire et l'histoire de l'esclavage (CNMHE; National Committee for the Memory and History of Slavery),³⁷ whose role is to advise the government on how to commemorate such a history.³⁸ Second, the fourth article (now repealed) of the Loi du 23 février passed in 2005 mandated that

French history textbooks teach ‘le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord’ (the positive role of France’s overseas presence, notably in North Africa).³⁹ A reaction from historians published in the newspaper *Le Monde* denounced the law while simultaneously cautioning against groups using such histories for their own ‘concurrency victimaire’—a move that captures the difficult balance scholars (and communities) who seek to recognize ‘minority’ histories in France must strike. They write:

le passé est devenu l’enjeu d’un discours revendicatif de forces qui se posent en héritières des victimes, avec d’autant plus d’insistance [...] qu’elles sont animées par une logique de concurrence victimaire.

(the past has become the central site of protest by those who proclaim themselves heirs of the victims, with ever-increasing insistence [...] that they are driven by the logic of competing victimhood.)⁴⁰

Moreover, as Françoise Vergès, President of the CNMHE, has illustrated, these histories are often mobilized in selective ways. In France, while the history of *slavery* faced occlusion in the twentieth century, the history of its *abolition* occupied a privileged and celebrated space in national mythology.⁴¹ Even those moments that transpired on French soil, such as ‘human zoos’, are still relatively marginalized in France’s national memory. For instance, Charles Forsdick points out how France’s memorial landscape still bears few traces of the ‘human zoos’ that were presented there—an observation made all the more prescient by the ‘Jardin de l’Outre-Mer scandal’ that emerged surrounding this very subject in 2011—only a year after his article’s publication.⁴²

The literary and musical works I consider in each chapter all contest how colonial history and the histories of formerly colonized peoples are cordoned off from national, French, hexagonal histories. The literature and music I study in Chapter 2, for instance, revisits the histories of colonization and the slave trade in conjunction with postcolonial immigration and national identity policies. In so doing, the works not only carve out space for immigrants and their descendants in the national imaginary, but they also interrogate the ways in which the gaze manifests itself in the historical arena. Later works—notably Alain Mabanckou’s *Black Bazar* (2009) and Léonora Miano’s *Blues pour Élise* (2010)—complicate notions of shared history often imputed to racial and ethnic minority communities, asking to what extent histories such as colonization and the slave trade continue to function as central moments for these populations. Miano’s novel in particular, which

focuses on France's 'Afropean' population, substantiates Nicki Hitchcott and Dominic Thomas's claim that what defines 'Afropeans' is not a larger shared 'black' or African diasporic history (which would include moments such as colonization or the slave trade), but rather shared experiences of marginalization within Europe.⁴³

Rhetoric and News Media

In broad terms, how France names its racial and ethnic minority populations, and how French media transmits images of these populations, constitute additional sites through which institutionalized spectacularism manifests itself. Here, one can cite various 'objects', including legislation, demographic information, and politicians' speeches, which promote certain ideas about France's 'internal others', such as their relationship to immigration and their supposed cultural differences. Institutionalized spectacularism also informs moments when these populations speak out to contest the terms of their representation through protests and organized rallies such as the 1994 *sans-papiers* protests or the 2005 *banlieue* riots, organizations such as the CRAN, or political parties such as the Indigènes de la République.⁴⁴

To give but one recent example: in 2009 Éric Besson, then minister of France's Ministère de l'Immigration, de l'Intégration, de l'Identité nationale et du Développement solidaire (Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and Codevelopment)—disbanded in 2010—opened the 'French National Identity Debate', a series of town-hall style forums supplemented by a website where French citizens were asked to define 'what it means to be French today'.⁴⁵ One could certainly read this debate in an inclusionary light as an opportunity for the French public to reaffirm those cultural values that distinguish France from other European nations. At the same time, however, the very act of opening up French 'national identity' to a debate also implies that the mere fact of having French citizenship is not synonymous with fully participating in French national identity. Seen in this way, the main thrust of the debate becomes exclusionary: pinpointing France's internal others. As author Faïza Guène put it, the debate reopens 'the same old story about the enemy within. The insidious question then becomes: "Will you be able to spot him?"⁴⁶

As I explored above, two privileges of those in power are the ability to control the terms of display and to define how they identify—or, to

use Fanonian terms, ‘recognizes’—themselves and their others. France’s colorblind universalist model, which prohibits distinguishing between citizens based on national origin, race, ethnicity, or religion, also contributes to institutionalized spectacularism. Though it is believed to promote national unity and fight inequality, the lack of an official vocabulary to address race and ethnicity in reality contributes to latent associations between whiteness and Frenchness, and between racial and ethnic minorities and foreignness. As Louis-Georges Tin has argued, the resistance to taking ‘ethnic statistics’—a term he eschews in favor of ‘statistics of diversity’—is partly due to the ever-present specter of Vichy France haunting the French collective imaginary.⁴⁷ Given this backdrop, quantifying diversity ‘would be tantamount to reverting to the Nazi period, when records of Jews facilitated the “Final Solution”’.⁴⁸ Furthermore, arguments opposing ‘ethnic statistics’ suggest that not only would collecting such demographic information implicitly acknowledge that racial and ethnic categories exist, but it would also increase the threat of ethno-racial factionalism (*communautarisme*) in France, to the detriment of a sense of united national identity.⁴⁹

The works I study all grapple with the larger issues of how minorities can gain recognition for themselves in contemporary France’s colorblind universalist paradigm. Above all, they interrogate the way this paradigm causes politicians and news media to use problematic proxies such as ‘immigration’ and ‘foreignness’ to discuss race and ethnicity.⁵⁰ The works I consider push back against the legacies of this rhetoric of ‘invasion’ and the association between minorities and ‘immigrants’, which, as a 2013 Ipsos poll illustrates, are still present in twenty-first-century France. Despite the fact that foreigners only make up 5.68% of France’s total population according to the 2009 census, the Ipsos poll found that 70% of French people believe there are ‘too many foreigners in France’ and that 62% agree with the statement ‘we no longer feel at home like we used to’.⁵¹ That the percentage of foreigners in France has remained fairly steady suggests that these discussions of ‘immigrants’ and ‘foreigners’ stand in for other conversations—namely the changing composition of France’s national populace in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, and national origin. Within France’s colorblind universalist context, however, such problematic equations between racial and ethnic minorities and foreigners are difficult to contest.

The works I analyze not only interrogate the terms through which racial and ethnic minorities have *been made* visible in France (such as their association with immigration, foreignness, and cultural alterity), they

also respond to and reimagine moments when such groups have *made themselves* visible in sociopolitical spheres.⁵² At their heart lies a deep engagement with the politics of naming and a demand for recognition on their own terms. While the works I explore in Chapter 2 highlight the distinctions between clandestine migrants and the *sans-papiers* (who entered France legally, but whose residency permits were revoked because of changes to France's immigration laws) the works I analyze in later chapters contest the association between minorities and foreigners. Alain Mabanckou's *Black Bazar*, for instance, paints a heterogeneous portrait of what might outwardly be considered one racial community: 'Black France'. Similarly, Léonora Miano's *Blues pour Élise* examines the contours of France's 'Afropean' population—those individuals of sub-Saharan African descent born on French soil, whose experiences have little in common with those who migrated themselves.

Cultural Marketplaces

I also contend that institutionalized spectacularism informs how works by so-called francophone authors and artists are promoted, marketed, and consumed in the cultural marketplace. It determines not only which narratives are legitimated and ultimately sold as works in the first place, it also shapes how cultural consumers (and critics) approach the works. Accordingly, I consider the works' content and form as well as the paratextual materials through which they are packaged. I suggest that elements from taxonomies such as 'world music' or 'francophonie' to the shelf spaces these works occupy in stores promote institutionalized spectacularism. Such taxonomies are largely dependent on the author's personal trajectory (most, though not all, personally immigrated to France from Africa), and thus should be read with skepticism alongside categorizations such as 'African', or 'black'.

The classifications 'francophone', and 'world music' are of particular import to this study. Following the 2006 prize season, in which non-French authors won five of the major literary awards,⁵³ a group of forty-four authors published what would come to be known as the 'Manifeste des quarante-quatre' ('Manifesto of the forty-four') in *Le Monde*, proposing 'littérature-monde en français' (world literature in French) as an alternative to the ghettoizing category of *francophonie*. For the signatories of the manifesto, the 2006 prize season was an indication that the 'francophone' regions were no longer the margins,

but rather at the center of cultural production in French.⁵⁴ In the realm of popular music studies, similar discussions have called into question the usefulness of the designation ‘world music’, which is applied to works as diverse as Navajo flute music, Tibetan monks’ chant, African popular music, and traditional Irish music. In fact, though ‘world music’ was legitimized by a dedicated top-40 chart on Billboard, and a dedicated section in most record stores, it is often described in terms of what it is *not*—*not* classical music, *not* (Western) pop, *not* jazz, *not* rock—just as the designation *francophonie* implies that an author is French-speaking, but *not* French.⁵⁵

In this book, I draw from methodologies that examine how ‘minority’ works are packaged within cultural marketplaces, proposed in such works as Graham Huggan’s *Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001) and Richard Watts’s *Packaging Post/Coloniality: The Manufacture of Literary Identity in the Francophone World* (2005). I also build on works that interrogate how these modes of reading disproportionately affect francophone authors, such as Lia Brozgal’s *Against Autobiography: Albert Memmi and the Production of Theory* (2014), and expand on seminal studies like Rey Chow’s *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (1993) that contend that, within these marketplaces, race and ethnicity become exotic commodities for the cultural consumer.

Remarkable in the works I have selected to study in *Race on Display in 20th- and 21st-Century France* is the way the authors and artists pre-emptively push back against the interpretive grids to which they know they will be subjected through their content and form. J. R. Essomba’s novel *Le Paradis du Nord* (*The Northern Paradise*, 1996), studied in Chapter 2, raises the question of the immigrant’s ability to tell his or her own story through a scene in which a French lawyer must speak on behalf of an immigrant (and vouch for his language abilities). As I show in Chapter 3, *Black Bazar* uses its form to contest canonical boundaries, but it also tricks its reader into deploying the reading strategies it will ultimately contest. Similarly, Zone d’Expression Populaire (Z.E.P.; Zone of Popular Expression)’s 2010 song, ‘La gueule du patrimoine’ (‘The Face of French Cultural Patrimony’), studied in Chapter 5, encodes this packaging into its structure through monologues that twice interrupt the song. During these interludes, a stereotypically French listener comments in real time about ‘La gueule du patrimoine’, and reveals his own assumptions regarding the types of narrative put forth by minority artists. In so doing, Z.E.P. asks to what extent the

works themselves might be complicit in perpetuating the stereotypes already ascribed to racial and ethnic minorities. Like Z.E.P., the other authors take a self-reflexive stance regarding their own participation in cultural marketplaces' institutionalized spectacularism.

French (and Francophone) Cultural Studies

Finally, I suggest that this institutionalized spectacularism also permeates the discipline of French (and francophone) cultural studies. Specifically, French cultural studies' efforts to rectify the other forms of institutionalized spectacularism I have outlined above have been framed through making visible racial and ethnic minorities' long presence in and contributions to France. In the anglophone scholarship, where notions of race, even when contested, are nevertheless used, studies such as Dominic Thomas's *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism* (2007), Trica Keaton, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Tyler Stovall's *Black France/France Noire: The History and Politics of Blackness* (2012), and Alec Hargreaves's *Multi-Ethnic France: Immigration, Politics, Culture and Society* (2007)—to name but three seminal examples—have sought to trace the contours of France's racial and ethnic minority populations in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. More recent works, notably Nicki Hitchcott and Dominic Thomas's edited volume *Francophone Afropean Literatures* (2014), have further complicated notions of racial communities' homogeneity in France by outlining how 'Afropeans' distinguish themselves from a larger 'Black France'. In the francophone scholarship, where race has historically been treated with more suspicion, scholarly titles explicitly addressing the question of race in contemporary France were slower to arrive, but as Tin notes, have increased exponentially since 2004.⁵⁶

While it is impossible to overstate the important work of the above studies, they all nevertheless unintentionally reinforce the idea that whiteness is the implicit norm from which racial and ethnic minorities depart. By continuing to affirm that racial and ethnic minorities *are* or *can be* French, these studies paradoxically reinforce—or, at the very least, continue to rehash—the assumption they seek to combat. Seen in this light, affirming the 'Frenchness' of racial and ethnic minorities shoulders this population with the continuing burden of *proving* their Frenchness. While positioning racial and ethnic minorities as a subject worth examining does ultimately pluralize notions of Frenchness, it

also nevertheless perpetuates normative gazing dynamics that posit racial and ethnic minority groups as hyperexamined internal other and the white (male) as seeing subject.⁵⁷ In my view, doing so constitutes institutionalized spectacularism within the discipline of French cultural studies. The project of pluralizing notions of Frenchness, then, must be coupled with an equal project of pointing out and naming whiteness and addressing the ways it operates as a blind spot in the field.

In *Race on Display in 20th- and 21st-Century France* I both expose and seek to rectify this lacuna within the scholarship by subjecting whiteness to the same inquiry as other racial and ethnic minority identities, primarily in my fifth chapter. In so doing, I draw from the principally anglophone field of whiteness studies to theorize how such conversations can be mapped onto the francophone world. In the end, giving whiteness consideration within a larger study on racial and ethnic identities and their relationship to national identity in contemporary France meets whiteness studies's goal of 'making whiteness strange'.⁵⁸ As I traced above in my discussion of 'Exhibit B', majority populations benefit from the privilege of not recognizing that their gaze—often touted as universal—is but one among many. In this book's final chapter, I therefore turn my gaze back around on the discipline itself, not only to pluralize those populations often positioned as objects of the gaze, but also to pluralize the gaze itself.

Race on Display in 20th- and 21st-Century France on Display: Chapter Descriptions

Race on Display in 20th- and 21st-Century France is composed of two main sections. In the book's first half, my goals are twofold: first, to illustrate how moments of explicit colonial institutional spectacles (particularly France's 1931 Exposition coloniale) fundamentally shaped notions of national and racial identities in France; second, to trace how the colonial gazing dynamics take on more pervasive and less explicit forms in the postcolonial moment through institutionalized spectacularism. I then examine one problem institutionalized spectacularism poses for marginalized populations in contemporary France: the very act of speaking out and contesting discrimination itself becomes a stereotypical narrative ascribed to racial and ethnic minorities. It is this dynamic that is exposed and contested through their form by the works I explore in the book's second half.

In the first chapter, ‘Civilized into the Civilizing Mission: The Gaze, Colonization, and Exposition Coloniale Children’s Comics’, I analyze a small but significant corpus of visual and musical works (including the Exposition’s official march song entitled ‘Nénufar’, and children’s comics such as *Nénufar, Nègre et Nègrette à l’Exposition* [*Negro and Negrette at the Exhibition*], and *Les Aventures de Papoul* [*The Adventures of Papoul*]) to trace the relationship between colonial institutional spectacles—in this case, the 1931 Exposition coloniale—and colonial institutionalized spectacularism. Outwardly, the works I study seem to undermine the gazing dynamics put forth at the colonial exhibition. Specifically, whereas the Exposition’s organizers sought at all costs to redirect their spectators’ attention away from the potentially dominating nature of their gaze on the colonized subject, the visual and musical works I study explicitly stage moments in which the colonized subject decries this gazing encounter as dehumanizing. Ultimately, however, these works do so precisely to denounce such understandings as misinformed, and to reassure their young readers and listeners of their responsibility to gaze upon the colonized other. In the second chapter, ‘Self-Spectacularization and Looking Back on French History’, my attention turns to institutionalized spectacularism in the postcolonial moment. Anchoring my analyses in 1990s *migrature* works and *sans-papiers* protests, I illustrate how vestiges of the colonial gazing dynamics inform how those deemed France’s internal others (now immigrants and racial and ethnic minorities) are seen and make themselves visible in late twentieth-century France. Drawing from a wide range of cultural works in which authors and artists ‘write to right’ images associated with racial minorities in literature (such as J. R. Essomba’s novel *Le Paradis du Nord*) and music (such as Salif Keïta’s ‘Nou Pas Bouger’ [‘We Will Not Move’], Meïway’s ‘Je suis sans-papiers’ [‘I am a *sans-papiers*’], and Manu Chao’s ‘Clandestino’ [‘The Clandestine Migrant’]) I consider the risks and stakes of self-spectacularization within the larger context of institutionalized spectacularism.

In the second half of the book, I turn to more recent works of literature, music, fashion, and dance that point out a potential pitfall inherent in self-spectacularization: while this act potentially contests stereotypes associated with immigrants and racial and ethnic minorities, and pluralizes notions of Frenchness, its ability to interrogate the larger gazing dynamics that position minorities as exotic spectacles in the first place remains limited. The works I examine in the book’s second half—such as Alain Mabanckou’s *Black Bazar* and Léonora Miano’s

Blues pour Élise—not only interrogate iterations of institutionalized spectacularism found in cultural marketplaces, they also self-consciously grapple with their own complicity (as cultural commodities sold within larger marketplaces) in profiting from this culture of exoticism. In the third chapter, ‘Writing, Literary *Sape*, and Reading in Mabanckou’s *Black Bazar*’, I draw from Congolese *sape* fashion practices to read Alain Mabanckou’s 2009 novel. I contend that the narrator-author’s references to cultural works from a variety of national and historical contexts constitute a formal technique which I term ‘literary *sape*’—a performance that interrogates the reading strategies to which the novel itself will be subjected. Similarly, Léonora Miano’s 2010 novel *Blues pour Élise*, examined in Chapter 4, turns its attention to Afropeans, who, though born in Europe, are often approached as ‘others’ in their own land. My reading of the novel in the fourth chapter, ‘Looking Back on Afropea’s Origins: Léonora Miano’s *Blues pour Élise* as an Afropean Mediascape’, contends that Afropeans’ visibility—or lack thereof—in European media are both symptoms and outcomes of the larger whitewashing of history and memory.

Finally, in my view, to take seriously the work the texts propose also requires questioning the visions of normalcy from which racial and ethnic minorities supposedly depart. In my final chapter, ‘Anti-White Racism without Races: French Rap, Whiteness, and Disciplinary Institutionalized Spectacularism’, I thus turn the gaze back around on French cultural studies itself, arguing that continuing to position racial and ethnic minorities as an object of inquiry while simultaneously allowing whiteness to pass unscrutinized constitutes institutionalized spectacularism at a disciplinary level. Through sociologist Saïd Bouamama and rap group Z.E.P.’s text and accompanying album, *Devoir d’Insolence* (*Duty to Be Insolent*, 2010), the accusations of ‘anti-white racism’ surrounding the work, and the 2005 *banlieue* riots, I illustrate how these works racialize whiteness using the same problematic proxies used to posit racial and ethnic minorities as France’s internal others. Finally, in the outro ‘Looking Back, Moving Forward’ I use recent events and debates (such as the 2011 Jardin d’Acclimatation scandal, or the 2007 opening and 2013 renaming of France’s Museum of Immigration) as a barometer for how *Race on Display in 20th- and 21st-Century France*’s central questions will continue to play out in the coming years.

CHAPTER ONE

Civilized into the Civilizing Mission

The Gaze, Colonization, and Exposition Coloniale Children's Comics

The stakes could not have been higher for the 1931 Exposition coloniale internationale, held in Vincennes when popular support for France's imperial project had reached an all-time low. The last and most impressive of a long line of ethnographic expositions, or 'human zoos', this monumental world's fair attracted 8 million visitors in its six-month run.¹ Guided by the goal of reigniting the French public's interest in the colonies, the Exposition's organizers took great care to orchestrate what visitors saw and, equally importantly, did not see. As Paul Reynaud, Minister of Colonies, put it in his inaugural address, 'le but essentiel de l'Exposition est de donner aux Français conscience de leur empire [...]'. Il faut que chacun de nous se sente citoyen de la plus grande France' (the primary goal of the Exposition is to give the French people a greater awareness of their empire [...]). Each of us must feel like a citizen of 'Greater France').² The act of observing the colonies in France became a way to rehearse the colonial mission.

To this end, officials promoted the Exposition as 'authentic' and expunged traces of its highly constructed nature, but hybridity and assimilation still proved particularly thorny issues. Competing narratives vied for space both on the colonized subject's body and within their larger displays. On the one hand, colonized subjects had to embody savagery in order to warrant further colonization; yet they could not be too 'savage', which would suggest the failure of the ongoing colonial project. As Pascal Blanchard points out, colonized subjects 'could not remain for too long in the category of the "savage" or the "barbarous", given that this would have been a denial of the core principles of the colonial mission'.³ Similarly, as Patricia Morton highlights, the organizers used colonized

pavilions' architecture—whose exteriors supposedly reflected 'authentic' cultural practices—to classify 'colonized races into hierarchies based on stages of evolution'.⁴ For instance, the pavilions for Martinique, Guadeloupe, and La Réunion, which the French considered examples of successful assimilation to French culture, 'employed "metropolitan" styles' while others did not.⁵

Of equal importance was what Exposition officials expunged from the fair—most notably the violence on which the colonial project depended. In fact, contemporary critics, particularly the surrealists and communists, who held a counter-Exhibition and published a manifesto entitled 'Ne Visitez pas l'Exposition coloniale' ('Don't Visit the Colonial Exhibition'), drew attention to this very absence.⁶ They expressed their stern critique in no uncertain terms: France's colonial project was founded on theft and murder.⁷ The Exposition, in their view, calculatingly lulled its visitor into a state where the imperial project's violence became justifiable: 'Il s'agit de donner aux citoyens de la métropole la conscience de propriétaires qu'il leur faudra pour entendre sans broncher l'écho des fusillades lointaines' (It's about giving French citizens the sense of ownership that they need to hear the faraway echoes of gunfire without flinching).⁸ Thieves were rebranded owners, and the echoes of literal violence no longer troubled spectators. Yet, while organizers erased all traces of literal colonial violence, they nevertheless worried that it might seep through the Exposition's cracks in other ways.

More importantly than controlling *what* visitors saw, the Exposition officials also explicitly addressed *how* their visitors would look, reframing the potentially dehumanizing 'gaze' as a curious 'look'—to borrow E. Ann Kaplan's formulation.⁹ For Kaplan, the distinction between the 'gaze' and the 'look' resides both in reciprocity and motivation. Where the 'gaze' is an act steeped in unequal power dynamics and domination, the 'look', implies a relationality (the 'Other' *can* look back, regardless of whether s/he chooses to do so) and often stems from a position of curiosity.¹⁰ To ensure that the literal violence of the colonial project did not re-emerge through figurative violence inherent in the gazing dynamics, organizers affirmed that the Exposition's purpose was neither entertainment nor exotic spectacle but rather education.¹¹ In so doing, they preemptively addressed the concerns Exposition visitors might have with both the exhibition's and the larger imperial project's violence against colonized subjects.

As Kaplan highlights, these visual dynamics are not innate; rather, they are socialized into us from the earliest of ages. She proposes that

'looking is constituted as the child learns the culture it finds itself in. It learns what to look at, what to avoid looking at; what is to be visible, what invisible; who controls the look, who is object of the look'.¹² In this chapter, I am interested in how France's children were socialized into the imperial gaze at the time of the Exposition coloniale internationale. The above sketch of how Exposition officials characterized the fair's gazing dynamics seems to suggest that the answer is straightforward: by insisting on its 'educational' perspective, they outlined who can look, who can't, and *how* to look. Turning to children's publications at the time of the Exposition, one finds a plethora of articles that uncritically espouse the Exposition's narratives of 'authentic' native subjects and an 'educational' perspective, which exude tones of curiosity. Many invite France's children to visit the Exposition to see 'des villages africains, asiatiques, océaniens, où les indigènes [...] travaillent, jouent, dansent, vivent enfin sous le ciel parisien exactement comme ils vivent chez eux' (African, Asian, [and] Oceanic villages where the natives [...] work, play, dance, and live at last under the Parisian sky *exactly as they do in their native land*).¹³

A smaller but significant corpus of comics in these publications, however, seems to directly undermine the very narratives which Exposition officials took great care to construct. Far from 'authentic' natives, the colonized subjects they depict not only exhibit hybridity and assimilation (or worse, are not 'natives' at all, but French individuals performing as natives), some are also aware of and actively protest their status as object of the French gaze. Considering these comics more closely, however, reveals that by reopening the questions the Exposition officials would rather keep closed, they address some of the latent objections children might have regarding the nature of their gaze (and the larger colonial project it represents). Rather than frame the gaze as a look of curiosity for educational purposes, the comics studied here insist that this look is one of surveillance, and that failing to scrutinize France's colonized subjects can have dangerous consequences for both the colonies and France.

Turning to colonial children's comics seems to fall outside this book's larger scope: investigating how racial and ethnic minorities in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century France problematize racially based notions of national identity through literature, music, fashion, and dance. As I examine in this chapter's conclusion, however, these images continued to circulate when many of France's current politicians and the francophone authors studied here were coming of age, and thus

fundamentally shaped how they saw themselves and those deemed their ‘others’. In fact, many of the authors I study in later chapters, notably Alain Mabanckou and Léonora Miano, have written about the way the comics studied here (and ones like them from the same period) initiated them into an understanding of how Africans were seen in the world. Specters of comics such as *Tintin au Congo* and racially stereotyped stock characters such as ‘Sambo’ reappear in Mabanckou’s *Black Bazar* (2009), studied in Chapter 3 and in Miano’s *Blues pour Élise*, studied in Chapter 4, respectively. Anne Donadey points out the important formative role of children’s literature: it ‘shapes an early ideological knowledge of what “we” and “others” are like’.¹⁴ As I illustrate in later chapters, it is exactly these notions of what ‘we’ and ‘others’ are like—that is, legacies of colonial imagery and the stereotypes they put forth—that racial and ethnic minority authors will ultimately contest. In order to trace postcolonial institutionalized spectacularism, then, I first turn to the colonial institutionalized spectacularism associated with imperial institutional spectacles.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not explicitly address the question of reproducing some of the racist images I analyze in this chapter—a perennial controversy in cultural studies. Scholars have rightly criticized academic studies that uncritically reproduce racist imagery; the most notable case is Malek Alloula’s *Le Harem colonial: images d’un sous-érotisme* (1981), of which Rey Chow wrote ‘Alloula’s discourse would have us believe that the French gaze at these women is pornographic while his is not’.¹⁵ I therefore do not reproduce such images lightly, and have expressly limited my corpus to three images of one central figure named Nénufar. Beyond limiting the reproduced material, I also contextualize and critically analyze the images, laying bare the colonial narratives they offer. Having said this, reproducing the images is in fact essential to *Race on Display in 20th- and 21st-Century France*’s larger goal: to destabilize not only legacies of French colonial racism, but also the gazing dynamics on which they depend. It is therefore to the colonial gaze they invite that I turn my attention.

Surveillance and the Dangers of Not Looking in ‘Nénufar’

One would expect the Exposition’s mascot to perfectly embody the types of peoples on display there: a naïve and colonized subject who lives in an exhibit and shares his ‘authentic’ culture with the French visitors.

This, however, could not be further from the truth. Though a central Exposition figure, Nénufar (waterlily), the fair's mascot, has received almost no attention from scholars.¹⁶ Nénufar's popularity meant that he took many commercialized forms: he was a plush doll that French children received as a thank you gift for renewing their *Les Enfants de France* (*The Children of France*) magazine subscription, he was a spokesperson in print advertising for commercial products such as Bayer aspirin, and a glass version of his body even became the container for the eponymous perfume Ramey released in 1931.¹⁷ Beyond his role as a commercial object, Nénufar also had a well-developed character expressed in two venues: he was the eponymous protagonist of the official march (with lyrics) performed most famously by Henri Alibert and played each morning at the Exposition, and a featured character in illustrator Pol Rab's recurring comic published in *Les Enfants de France*. Outwardly, Nénufar seems a curious choice for the Exposition coloniale's mascot for two reasons. First, though the article introducing Nénufar to young French readers announces that he has arrived in an Exposition package, he is never depicted at the Exposition in either the images or the song.¹⁸ Second, far from a docile, authentic native, Nénufar seeks out French culture at all costs. Closer analysis of musical and visual representations of Nénufar, however, reveal that these images work through those narratives expunged from the Exhibition: assimilation and hybridity. Specifically, Nénufar's attempts to adopt European fashion norms suggest that colonized gestures toward assimilation are always incomplete and mimetic. Ultimately, these works depict him as both childlike and threatening in order to justify European surveillance of colonized subjects and to demand that *Les Enfants de France*'s audience rehearse this gaze with Nénufar.

In its first issue, published in 1931, *Les Enfants de France* built anticipation for the Exposition coloniale that would take place later that year by introducing Nénufar to its young readers (Figure 1). The issue's cover rehearses colonial narratives, presenting Nénufar as a childlike, non-threatening, but yet grateful recipient of civilized culture and loyal to his 'new French friends': 'Nénufar, le nouvel ami des enfants de France leur adresse tous ses voeux pour 1931' (Nénufar, the new friend of France's children wishes them all the best in 1931).

This image evacuates all notions of colonial violence while simultaneously reinscribing another type of violence: racist imagery. The exaggerated lips in particular are reminiscent of other depictions of sub-Saharan African colonized subjects, reminding the reader of the

Banania posters, which Léopold Sédar Senghor famously proposed to ‘déchirer [...] sur tous les murs de France’ (tear down from every wall in France).¹⁹

The article which illustrator Pol Rab wrote to accompany this image epitomizes childlike depictions of colonized subjects. Not only does he claim Nénufar as his adopted child, he also emphasizes Nénufar’s naïveté: ‘il est un petit négroillon qui est très intelligent et possède un excellent cœur. Mais il *ignore totalement la vie civilisée des petits Français*’ (he’s a little Negro who is very intelligent and has a heart of gold. But *he knows nothing at all of French children’s civilized lives*).²⁰ Presenting Nénufar in this way encouraged young readers to rehearse France’s civilizing mission by figuratively ‘adopting’ him too. In so doing, text and image reinforce notions of colonized subjects as children, and reiterate colonial narratives that the colonized subject desires assimilation.

Similarly, the lyrics to the ‘Nénufar’ march, which spectators heard each morning at the Exposition, present Nénufar as a child lacking self-awareness. Moreover, they reaffirm that Nénufar’s naïveté is authentic, not performed:

Nénufar!
T’as du r’tard!
T’as du r’tard
Mais t’es un petit rigolard.
T’es nu comme un ver,
Tu as le nez en l’air
Et les ch’veux en pail’ de fer!²¹
(Waterlily!
You’re slow!
You’re slow!
But you’re a grinning little fellow.
You’re stark naked,
Unaware of what goes on around you,
And you have steel wool hair!)

These lines deploy racial stereotypes to reinforce Nénufar’s blackness (‘steel wool hair’) and reiterate associations between colonized subjects and children who lack self-awareness. In fact, this depiction of Nénufar as ‘stark naked’, which is not matched in any of the visual images (he is always depicted, at the very least, with a loincloth, shirt front, cuffs, and gloves on his feet), speaks to his authenticity: no artifice (even clothing) stands between the viewer and Nénufar’s true self.

Like other descriptions of colonized subjects' attempts to adopt European clothing, the way in which Nénufar adopts (or fails to adopt) European fashion rehearses three of the civilizing mission's central narratives: first, that the colonized subject desires assimilation; second, that it is the colonizer's responsibility to anticipate colonial subjects' needs; and third, that any attempt on the part of the colonized subject to adopt European civilization can only ever be mimetic. The song's lyrics mock Nénufar's attempt to conform to European fashion norms: 'Pour être élégant / c'est aux pieds qu'il mettait ses gants' (To be elegant / he wore his gloves on his feet).²² This equation between elegance and European fashion underscores that Nénufar desires to acquire European culture at all costs.²³

Similar parallels can be found in other colonial visual and musical works. For instance, in the song 'Joli Chapeau' ('Beautiful Hat', 1952) the protagonist describes (in *petit-nègre*)²⁴ how he traded all of his pearls 'contre un joli chapeau / A gentil Monsieur blanc qui venait par bateau' (for a beautiful hat / From nice white Mister that came by boat).²⁵ Just as the gloves symbolize elegance for Nénufar, the hat signifies assimilation for the protagonist of 'Joli Chapeau'. In fact, the narrator in 'Joli Chapeau' boasts that his new hat accords him prestige within his society: 'Chapeau, ça me fait distinction, / Bell' fill's ne regard'nt plus que moi, / Les Chefs me font génuflexions' (Hat, it makes me distinction / Beautiful ladies look only at me, / Chiefs grovel before me).²⁶ One also thinks of the panel from *Tintin au Congo* (published, like Nénufar, in 1931) where two Congolese men fight over a European straw hat.²⁷ Tintin immediately stops the fight and devises an ingenious solution to the problem: he cuts the hat in two and presents the brim to one and the crown to the other. While the Congolese individuals are pleased with this outcome, remarking in *petit-nègre* 'Li Blanc li très juste! [...] Li donné à chacun la moitié du chapeau!' (White man very fair. Him give half hat to each one!), the comic draws attention to the absurdity of this solution, since the hat is no longer functional for either man.²⁸ In the European imaginary, symbols of assimilation—even when no longer useful—garner respect within African communities.

Second, Nénufar's clothing positions the French civilizing mission as generous. The description of how Nénufar obtains his clothing offered in *Les Enfants de France* makes explicit the connection between clothing and the gift of civilization (through colonization): 'ce sont des cadeaux que lui ont fait des explorateurs qui ont traversé son pays' (they are gifts given to him by the explorers who crossed his country).²⁹ A similar

narrative is also rehearsed in another children's publication contemporaneous with the 'Nénufar' comics: Jean de Brunhoff's *L'Histoire de Babar, le petit éléphant* (1931).³⁰ When Babar first arrives in the European-style town, he immediately remarks the fashion of European men and, though he does not understand where or how to obtain such clothing, nevertheless aspires to wear such fine garments himself. The Old Lady who witnesses the scene recognizes this desire without Babar having to express it verbally. Anticipating the colonized subject's wish, the Old Lady gives Babar her purse, which he uses to purchase a new wardrobe. These gifts of clothing in both *Babar* and 'Nénufar' place the colonized subject in the role of grateful recipient—a position Nénufar acknowledges when he offers flowers to his young French readers (Figure 1).

Most importantly, however, Nénufar's clothing—particularly the ways in which he misadopts European fashion norms—quells anxieties regarding colonized subjects' assimilation. Though they would outwardly seem a symbol of Nénufar's acculturation and supposed progress, his attempts to adopt European clothing are instead a sign of his distance from French culture. In most of the illustrations that appear in *Les Enfants de France*, Nénufar participates in activities (including celebrating Bastille day, or preparing crêpes) wearing the clothing described in the initial article about him: a shirt front, one cuff, and gloves on his feet (though when preparing crêpes, he also dons a chef's hat). This clothing, which serves no practical use, is therefore at once a symbol of Nénufar's attempts to assimilate, a reminder of the colonial gesture of benevolent giving, and an indication of Nénufar's inability to gaze upon himself critically. His clothing, a seeming sign of Nénufar's hybrid culture, instead repeats the association between colonized subjects and children.³¹

Most of the comics show Nénufar in this semi-naked state; however, two depict him in the process of 'dressing up'—an activity familiar to most children—to reinforce the idea that his assimilation can only ever be mimetic. In the first, Nénufar holds up a white mask in front of his face; a box containing additional white masks rests on the floor while another sits underneath the mirror (Figure 2). The caption reads, 'Je mets un masque parce qu'ils croient que je suis déguisé' (I put on a mask because they think that I'm dressed up). In the second, Nénufar wears a red jacket over a white shirt, a black top hat, gloves on his hands, and dress shoes; his false shirt front and cuffs can be seen draped over a couch in the background. Within the frame, Nénufar defiantly proclaims, 'Moi aussi, je me déguise' (Me too, I dress up) (Figure 3).

NÉNUFAR



Je mets un masque parce qu'ils croient tous que je suis déguisé.

Figure 2: Illustration of Nénufar dressing up by Pol Rab in *Les Enfants de France* (1931).

NÉNUFAR



Figure 3: Illustration of Nénufar 'disguising' himself by Pol Rab in *Les Enfants de France* (1931).

These images conflate race and culture: putting on a white mask is just as much a process of ‘disguising’ oneself as correctly putting on European-style clothing. In fact, Nénufar seems to gesture in these images toward racial and cultural ‘passing’.³² However, the illustrations’ emphasis on ‘disguising’ is central: not only does it imply impermanence, but the fact that Nénufar describes himself as ‘disguised’ in both images seems to suggest that he, too, understands that this ‘disguise’ is not real. These failed attempts at acculturation, to borrow Homi Bhabha’s terms, perpetuate the colonized subject ‘as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. [...] Almost the same but not white’.³³ The comic and song reinforce the dividing line between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and demand that their young audience scrutinize colonized subjects, looking particularly for cracks in their outward narrative of Frenchness. In suggesting that colonized subjects are ‘almost the same but not quite’, the images discussed here challenge their young audience to seek out and name the ‘not quite’—that which marks Nénufar as different.

In addition to portraying him as childlike, however, both media depict Nénufar as a potential threat, illustrating how competing and equivocal narratives share space on the colonized subject’s body. The song’s lyrics, for instance, also deploy racist tropes of the hypersexualized black male in describing Nénufar: ‘T’as fait la conquête des Parisiennes / Tu es leur fétiche / Et tu leur portes veine’ (You’ve won over the Parisian women / You’re their favorite / And you bring them good luck).³⁴ Nénufar’s ‘conquest’ of French women carries a tone of domination, repositioning him as a potential aggressor.³⁵ This idea that Nénufar might be carrying out his own conquest of French women inverts the sexual undercurrent of the colonial project, which is often discussed in terms of ‘rape’.³⁶ Nénufar’s potential to engage in the sexual conquest of white French women thus points to an anxiety that the colony will ‘come home’ to colonize the *métropole*—a fear that francophone authors such as Alain Mabanckou, discussed in Chapter 3, later revisit.³⁷ Though in this reading, the term ‘la conquête’ certainly might attribute agency to Nénufar, one can also read it as objectifying him: by referencing his black masculinity, the song returns him to the stereotypical role of a hypersexualized black male—an object pitted against the purity of white French women.³⁸

Moreover, this discussion of Nénufar as the object of French women’s gaze also raises larger discussions about the gendered dynamics of the gazing positions. Scholars have pointed out that the gaze is often associated with a masculine subject position—in fact, as Laura Mulvey

and other feminist scholars have pointed out, cinema and other visual media often automatically adopt a masculine subject position, particularly when gazing upon female objects.³⁹ Thinking of a colonial or Orientalist gaze in the francophone context often brings to mind the North African case, where cultural works such as Eugène Delacroix's *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (1834), the portraits Marc Garanger took and subsequently published in *Femmes algériennes 1960* (1989), and the postcards Malek Alloula studies in *Le Harem colonial: images d'un sous-érotisme* (1981) conspicuously offer the viewer unmediated access to private or veiled spaces and bodies.⁴⁰ Here, Nénufar's position as object of the French women's gaze seems to reverse these dynamics: it is French women who become the gazing subject, while the sub-Saharan African male becomes the sexualized object.

Yet a closer look reveals that the gazing dynamics here are more complex than they seem. Though the French women look on Nénufar, this look is not, in fact, one of dominance, but rather one through which they potentially fall victim to Nénufar's charm, regardless of whether he is a childlike figure or a sexualized object. Unlike the other occasional female gazes in the comics discussed in this chapter, which overwhelmingly position the French female gazer as a motherly caretaker figure who maintains an appropriate distance from the colonized subjects in order to supervise their entry into French civilization (such as the Old Lady in Babar discussed above, or the mother in the comic 'Négro et Nègrette à l'Exposition', discussed below), the song 'Nénufar' points out that not all French gazes are equal. Though a French woman can occupy the position of gazing subject, in so doing, she may nevertheless fall victim to the guile of the very object she gazes upon. In this way, the song (more so than the comic) suggests that though the French women possess a gaze (unlike the colonized spectacles such as Nénufar), this gaze may nevertheless lead them to lose the very agency that affords them their gazing position in the first place. In the end, the song 'Nénufar' suggests that both colonized subjects and French women's gaze on those colonized subjects must be subjected to surveillance.

Though Nénufar's two positions—child or sexual aggressor—might outwardly seem contradictory since the former implies complete naiveté, whereas the second endows him with malevolent agency, what unites them is that they both justify—and indeed require—Nénufar's surveillance. If he is childlike, then it becomes France's duty (as a part of the civilizing mission) to watch over him and guide him toward civilization; if he is a sexual aggressor, French society must watch him closely

to ensure that he does not harm or corrupt French women. This equivocality also illustrates Bhabha's assertion that stereotypes about colonized subjects profit from a certain flexibility:

The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); *he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child*; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces.⁴¹

While, as I have suggested, depicting Nénufar in these ways reinforces the need for surveillance, as Bhabha points out, it also suggests that the colonized subject's 'true identity' is a moving target. Is he a child lacking critical self-awareness? Or is he a 'liar, and a manipulator of social forces' who knows all too well the roles expected of him, and who merely performs these roles as a means to evade European surveillance? The latter position calls to mind Fatimah Tobing Rony's formulation of minorities' 'third eye'—intimate knowledge of how they were seen in others' eyes which they can then strategically deploy through a performance, 'a composing of the self for spectacle'.⁴² It is precisely from the coexistence of these potentially conflicting identities that representations of Nénufar draw their force. For Stuart Hall, the coexistence of such images reveals 'a deep ambivalence' and, what is more, draws attention to 'the double vision of the white eye through which they are seen'.⁴³ In suggesting Nénufar's equivocality, these *ambivalent* images ensure that their audience's attention remains on him, allowing the larger racist frameworks ('the double-vision of the white eye') responsible for creating and upholding such narratives to evade critical scrutiny. Keeping the children's attention on the object of the gaze in this way allows the gaze itself to avoid scrutiny.

Published in the same venue as 'Nénufar', the comic to which I now turn, 'Les Aventures de Papoul' ('The Adventures of Papoul'), seems, on its surface, quite different. Specifically, where 'Nénufar' emphasizes the protagonist's authenticity, 'Les Aventures de Papoul' raises the possibility of inauthenticity at the Exposition coloniale. Yet, as I argue below, these different takes on the issue of authenticity ultimately serve the same end: redirecting readers' attention away from the violence of the comics' gazing dynamics.

The Disastrous Consequences of Failing to Scrutinize
in *Les Aventures de Papoul*

Just as the other comics, children's magazines (particularly *Benjamin aux colonies* [*Junior in the Colonies*]), and guidebooks published at the time slip unsignaled between the real colony and its reproduction at the Vincennes Exhibition, another recurring adventure story, 'Les Aventures de Papoul', written and illustrated by Géo Franc, literally springs from this slippage. Though the comic principally recounted Papoul's adventures in North Africa, its first installment was published in *Les Enfants de France*'s special issue on the Colonial Exhibition. In this issue, Papoul's uncle Yaoulick, who has just returned from living in the colonies, takes Papoul to the Exposition. To demonstrate the bargaining skills he has acquired in the colonies, Yaoulick negotiates with what he believes to be an authentic 'Arab' merchant for an authentic rug. The comic reveals, however, that the merchant is not Arab but *marseillais*, and that the rug is a mass-produced reproduction.⁴⁴ In the comic's diegetic world, neither Yaoulick nor Papoul will discover this mistake; however, the comic draws the reader's attention to it. This suggestion that *Marseillais* are pretending to be Arabs and selling inauthentic wares at the Exhibition seems to directly contradict the wider discourse of authenticity promoted by this issue of *Les Enfants de France* specifically and advanced in writings about the Exposition coloniale more generally.

Moreover, that French individuals can 'pass' as natives well enough to convince those who have lived there (Yaoulick) of their authenticity reveals the epistemological anxieties bound up in the colonial mission. Yaoulick's act of purchasing an inauthentic rug at an exorbitant price from an inauthentic 'other' not only suggests that the Exposition's visitors might be duped into doing the same, but also that colonial officials might figuratively buy into exoticized and inauthentic visions of the colonies. In buying the worthless commodity, Yaoulick 'buys into' the merchant's exoticized version of colonized culture, and pays dearly for it.

This comic highlights the dangers of what happens when the European gazing subject fails to scrutinize an image. What ultimately becomes the object of the reader's gaze is not necessarily the *Marseillais*, but rather Yaoulick and his inability to see through the *Marseillais*'s performance. By highlighting Yaoulick's lack of knowledge, the comic reminds its readers of their responsibility as gazers: to critically interrogate all received images, and to serve as the ultimate judge of their authenticity. In so doing, the comic civilizes the young reader into a framework where

his or her gaze is not just justified, but required. Failure to gaze, in this world, potentially leads to disaster for both France and its colonies.

At the same time, however, justifying the gaze in this way leaves unaddressed some of the main objections French children might have—namely that colonized subjects might oppose their objectification at the Exposition. The final children's publication to which I now turn, 'Négro et Négrette à l'Exposition' ('Négro and Négrette at the Exhibition'), will raise these very anxieties to subsequently dismiss them as misguided.

Négro and Négrette: From Racist Gaze to Curious Look

Depicted in another children's serial entitled *Nos albums de la quinzaine* (*Our Fortnightly Comics*),⁴⁵ Négro and Négrette outwardly seem more suited than Nénufar for the role of Exhibition mascot, particularly because unlike Nénufar (who is never on display at the Exhibition), they and their family live at the Exhibition. In fact, Négro, Négrette, and their family function as native informants who legitimize the Exposition's claims of authenticity. Upon arriving at the Exposition, their father, the village chief, inspects the structures and confirms that, to his amazement, they are identical to those found in Africa:

Il [le père] a parcouru toute l'Afrique et vraiment il n'y a pas une faute. C'est à croire qu'on a transporté des cases et des maisons toutes faites sur les grands bateaux et le vieux chef est plein de respect.⁴⁶

(He [the father] has traveled all of Africa and really, he finds no flaws. It's as if completely assembled huts and houses had been brought [to France] on large boats and the old chief is full of respect.)

Here, Négro and Négrette's father legitimates the way in which the Exhibition's pavilions were presented to the French public: not as simulacra, but as authentic villages transported to mainland France.

Regardless of their medium and geographical backdrop, most fictional works of the time—like 'Nénufar'—depict colonized subjects as blissfully unaware of their status as the object of the French gaze; 'Négro et Négrette à l'Exposition' constitutes a monumental exception in this regard. In fact, not only are Négro and Négrette both aware of their status as object of the French visitors' gaze, but the comic invites its young reader to see the fair through the two Africans' (albeit invented) perspective. For instance, early on it describes Négro and Négrette's impressions of the 'Toubab' who pass before them in a never-ending

stream. Using the word ‘Toubab’—an Eastern Maninka word meaning ‘a person of white skin’, and often used to signify Europeans—forces the young French reader to confront his or her own image in the eyes of the ‘other’, calling to mind bell hooks’s notion of the ‘oppositional gaze’ (discussed in this book’s introduction).

Moreover, this perspective also initially seems to suggest the violence of France’s display practices—a move which stands to contradict the narrative that the European gazing position was one of benevolent curiosity.⁴⁷ The comic imagines how Négro and Négrette feel about being ‘on display’ at the Exposition:

Les négrellons [...] n’aiment pas beaucoup se sentir l’objet de conversations. On les montre du doigt, c’est tout juste si on ne leur donne pas des morceaux de brioche comme aux petits singes du jardin zoologique. Négrette est furieusement vexée. Elle croit qu’on se moque d’elle.⁴⁸

(The little Negroes [...] don’t like feeling that they are the subject of conversations. People point at them, they practically give them pieces of bread like they do to the little monkeys at the zoo.

Négrette is very upset. She thinks the visitors are making fun of her.)

The emphasis on the children’s negative emotional reactions (‘they don’t like’ and ‘very upset’) seems to be an acknowledgement that the Exposition’s gazing dynamics are inherently dehumanizing—a fact, that, as I suggested above, Exposition officials took great pains to elide. The comic’s very next line, however, suggests that the gazing dynamic itself is not malevolent; rather Négro and Négrette only perceive it as such because they do not understand it. Though the comic does not use the terms ‘gaze’ and ‘look’ per se, it nevertheless implicitly and preemptively acknowledges its child audience’s potential objection to and unease with the idea that this act of looking might be a ‘gaze’—that is, a unidirectional act steeped in inequality—and instead reframes it as a benevolent ‘look’. Far from malicious, the French visitors are merely curious: ‘C’est pourtant tout le contraire. Tout le monde s’accorde à trouver ce village nègre et leurs habitants tout à fait gentils’ (It’s in fact quite the opposite. Everyone agrees that this Negro village and its inhabitants are very nice).⁴⁹ The suggestion that the children fundamentally misunderstand the French visitors’ intent reiterates the colonial narrative equating colonized subjects with children who, at best, have an incomplete understanding of the larger context. Moreover, here, the ‘look’ becomes a metaphor for the larger colonial project. Read in this light, the text repackages imperialism as a benevolent *mission*

civilisatrice underpinned by curiosity, and reframes any resistance on the part of the colonized subject as erroneous.

Nowhere is this made clearer than in a scene where the boundaries between spectator and spectacle literally break down and, though a young French girl enacts racist physical violence on Négrette, only the latter is punished. One day, a young, well-dressed ‘Toubab’ visits the Exposition and, curious about Négro and Négrette:

s'[est] permis de frotter la joue de la négriquette avec son doigt mouillée de salive, dans le but de se rendre compte si ‘c’était du bon cirage’. Profondément humiliée par ce geste, Négrette se jeta sur la petite.⁵⁰

(permitted herself the liberty of rubbing the little Negro girl’s cheek with her finger, wet with saliva, in order to find out if ‘it was good shoe polish’. Profoundly humiliated by this act, Négrette threw herself upon the young girl.)

Though the young French girl’s action is profoundly racist, and Négrette has every right to protest, the comic’s author does not agree. Following this altercation, Négro and Négrette’s entire family is punished, while nothing happens to the young ‘Toubab’ (or her mother). Judging Négrette guilty and the ‘Toubab’ innocent insists (like the scene above) on the young French girl’s benevolence and demands that the reader understand Négrette’s reaction not as justified, but rather as an uncontrolled, violent outburst. In so doing, the work also reinforces stereotypical narratives about Africans’ quick temper.

Here again, the comic acts out, through a symbolic altercation at the Exposition (that is, on French soil), the very real one transpiring in the colonies. The comic explicitly stages a racist act in order to respond by suggesting that it is misguided to interpret the Exposition’s gazing dynamics (and the larger colonial dynamics for which they stand) in this way. The comic acts as a manual that anticipates the types of uncomfortable and even conflicted reactions that young French visitors might experience at the Exposition (and introduced to France’s colonial project more generally). Overall, the comic makes it abundantly clear that to denounce France’s colonial project and the Exposition as dehumanizing is to fail to understand them. Young readers learn that it is wrong to identify with those on display (for they are punished). Moreover, they learn to see violent rebellion, such as those transpiring in the colonies, as a reaction stemming from flawed assumptions.

Significantly, the comic departs from the typical gendered dynamics of the gaze depicted in most of the popular cultural works in my corpus.

Though the other comics and songs studied here propose the African male body as the object of the European male and female subjects' gaze, here, both gazer and object are female children—a homosocial encounter that sets it apart from the adult encounter⁵¹ described in the song 'Nénufar' discussed above. These dimensions in 'Négro et Négrette' seem to evacuate the erotic dimension; here, the female-on-female gaze becomes one of curiosity, rather than sexual conquest, and there seems to be no hint that the young 'Toubab' might fall prey to Négrette's guile in the same way as the French women might be figuratively conquered by Nénufar's charm. And yet, though the comic reaffirms that French children of both sexes possess the right and responsibility to gaze on France's colonial subjects, it simultaneously intimates that doing so potentially poses risks to young girls in particular. Though Négrette reports feeling 'infuriated' when the visitors are of unspecified gender, she only becomes violent when subjected to the female gaze (and subsequent racist violence). The Exposition officials who subsequently punish Négrette's family, then, watch over the young French girl's gaze and intervene when it endangers her.

Immediately following this judgment, the comic turns to the topic of colonized subjects' assimilation. The scene begins one morning when Négro and Négrette visit the zoo adjacent to the Exposition, where they take pleasure in looking at the animals on display, as they have now done for several mornings. Gazing on the animals just as the French visitors gaze on them suggests that Négro and Négrette are beginning to adopt French values and practices. Yet, as suggested by the scene that follows, absent wider frameworks and surveillance, their attempts at assimilation will only lead them to misbehave and to become lost.

Suddenly, the young Africans realize that they have ventured outside of the zoo's gates and find themselves caught up in a French crowd near a metro station. They follow the crowd underground and, without supervision, become delinquents, riding the metro for hours before French forces of order finally expel them. Completely disoriented upon their return to the surface, they ask a nearby French woman where they are. Though the conversation reveals that Négro and Négrette are far from the Exposition, the woman acquiesces to her two sons' pleas to invite the Africans to their home for snack time instead of returning them directly to Vincennes. In so doing, the comic invites its young French reader to metaphorically act out France's *civilizing mission* within the *métropole*.

This snack time scene rehearses the epitome of assimilationist narratives. Taking Négro and Négrette by the hand (read: adopting

them), the two nameless boys introduce (read: educate) Négro and Négrette to the wonders of their bourgeois French snacks (read: civilization). The young Africans marvel at the variety and exquisiteness of the morsels placed before them and, of course, devour them without any sign of manners. Next comes music. The French boys put on a tango (the height of civilization and coordinated ballroom dancing), but Négrette doesn't like it (read: has no taste for civilization). Instead, she begins dancing in her own fashion. Though she remains blissfully unaware, her exotic dance immediately draws a crowd: 'Hôtes et invités se sont arrêtés pour regarder la négrienne' (Hosts and guests stopped what they were doing to watch the little Negro girl).⁵² The comic does not rehash Négrette's objections to being the object of the gaze here. Rather, it reaffirms that looking is not only permitted but also required. New walls—now invisible—separate the exotic spectacle (Négrette) from gazing subject (the French onlookers—both children and adults). What is more, unlike the Exposition's visible walls, which signaled to Négrette her status as exotic spectacle—a status she ultimately contested—these invisible walls evade her critical scrutiny and ours as readers.

Though intended only as a one-time invitation, the comic explains that this brief glimpse into French life is enough to further Négro and Négrette's desire to assimilate, and that the children return each week to the same household.⁵³ This connection between the French family and the young Africans not only provides a structured setting for their assimilation, it also develops into a lifelong friendship between the French family and Négro and Négrette's. When, at the comic's end, Négro, Négrette, and their family return to their village, they tell their fellow villagers of 'leur reconnaissance et leur amitié à leurs amis de France' (their gratitude for and friendship with their French friends).⁵⁴ Like the image discussed above where Nénufar demonstrates his gratitude at having received a taste of French civilization in the discarded garments he wears (symbolized by the flowers in Figure 1), this ending to 'Négro et Négrette à l'Exposition' returns the colonized subject to the role of grateful recipient of colonization. In the end, the comic's message is clear: even if the colonized subjects protest initially, once they obtain a more global vision of 'civilization' in a highly structured environment, they inevitably see things differently.

Conclusions: Colonial Comics' Legacies

What started off as seeming incongruities between these comics and the 1931 Exhibition's larger narratives ultimately circle back to reinforce the role of the European gazing subject. Rather than undermine the discourse of authenticity put forth at the Exposition coloniale, the comics use different means to the same end. In depicting the dangers of failing to scrutinize an image, 'Les Aventures de Papoul' demands that the reader keep his or her attention focused squarely on it. 'Négro and Négrette à l'Exposition' must acknowledge colonial racism in order to reframe it as a benevolent gift of civilization. The right to gaze is contested only to be affirmed, whereupon the colonized subjects are returned to the comfortable role of exoticized spectacle. The comics not only invite the reader to gaze upon the racialized object, but also suggest that to fail to do so is dangerous both for France and for the colonized subject. Even when they seem to acknowledge the larger racist structures that produce these images, the works ultimately draw their reader's eyes away from them and back to the image.

The public outcry against racist images that resurfaced in the twenty-first century suggests that the comics succeeded all too well in this endeavor, illustrated through two cases. First, in 2006, Milan Music released a compilation CD in France entitled *Le beau temps des colonies*.⁵⁵ Among the twelve tracks one finds the colonial Exposition's official march 'Nénufar', analyzed above. One of the famous Banania posters, depicting a smiling, docile *tirailleur* (colonized troop) and his *petit-nègre* lexicon ('y'a bon' [sho' good eatin'])⁵⁶ serves as the CD's cover art, indicating the stereotypical discourse put forth in the songs before one even listens to the album. Following widespread negative attention both in news media and on the website of French store FNAC, where people labeled the album 'shameful' and called for its censure,⁵⁷ the President of Milan Music, Emmanuel Chamboredon, released a statement defending the music and the cover art:

Les chansons les plus excessives ont été écartées [...]. Notre but est de *restituer l'ambiance de l'époque*. Quant à la couverture, elle est bien choisie car elle reflète à la fois la mythologie des années 1930 et l'héroïsme des troupes coloniales.⁵⁸

(The most over-the-top songs were avoided [...]. Our goal is to *bring back the ambiance of the era*. As for the cover, it's well chosen because it reflects both the mythology of the time and the heroism of colonial troops.)

Similarly, in 2007, another colonial work depicting racist stereotypes—*Tintin au Congo*, originally published in the same year as the Exhibition—came under fire in France and across Europe. First, British human rights worker David Enright campaigned to have it removed from the children’s section of Borders stores in the anglophone world.⁵⁹ Later that same year, Belgian student Bienvenu Mbutu Mondondo took legal action to have the comic book banned in Belgium. In 2012, Mondondo received his answer: *Tintin* would remain on bookshelves.⁶⁰ In France, members of CRAN similarly asked France’s Minister of Culture, Frédéric Mitterrand, to require publishers to add a prefatory notice to the comic book, just as Britain’s Commission for Racial Equality had added to the English version in 2007.⁶¹

As laudable as they might be—for we should always point out and subsequently contest racist imagery—the calls to censor these racist materials are nevertheless misguided for two principal reasons. First, they take issue with, and therefore depend on, the discrepancy between the racist image and ‘reality’, for instance, the depiction of black Africans as savage, uncivilized, and uneducated. Attempting to counter these images is, in fact, counterproductive, and represents the opposite side of the anxieties that were put forth in the works studied in this chapter. Calling for the censorship of *Tintin au Congo* because it does not depict Africans as they ‘really are’ nevertheless depends on the existence of an authentic identity from which these images deviate. Though the images which those who call for censorship would promote (black Africans as educated, for example) differ wildly from those put forth in these colonial works, in seeking to remove the ‘incorrect’ racist images from circulation, the critics’ focus nevertheless rests at the level of these works’ content. All eyes remain on the (formerly) colonized subject, and scrutinize the degree to which the ‘image’ matches ‘reality’. As Mireille Rosello points out, the endeavor of interrogating these stereotypical images is always self-defeating because ‘the “truth” of a stereotype—its identity—cannot be found in what is said about the ethnic group but in the specific features of the statement itself’.⁶² Reformulated to fit the largely image-centric analyses offered in this chapter, the ‘truth’ of these larger (racist) stereotypes resides in the gazing dynamics through which they are perpetuated. It is therefore precisely to this gaze that I argue we must draw our attention—an act that censorship prevents.

Ultimately, then, to combat the underlying colonial racism and its vestiges which resurface in contemporary France, we must turn our attention not to the images of racial and ethnic minorities offered by the

works I have analyzed in this chapter, but rather to the anxieties they would rather hide from us. Far from being confined to the colonial period, the larger gazing dynamics I have analyzed in this chapter form the basis for how France understands its racial and ethnic minority populations today, particularly those who are said to ‘speak for themselves’ and ‘make themselves visible’. The works studied in the following chapters could be said to be a kind of mirror image of the Exposition’s gazing dynamics. Instead of being put on display, which implies a sort of radical dehumanizing status as object, the musical and literary works I study actively speak out on behalf of racial and ethnic minorities in France and seek to make these populations visible, in their own way and on their own terms.

Yet, as the literary and musical works I examine in chapters 3, 4, and 5 point out, the act of writing (or singing) to ‘right’ stereotypical images is also potentially problematic, given the wider context of institutionalized spectacularism, which still positions minorities as the object of the French gaze. Each of the works thus negotiates the fine line between reproducing (and, by extension, legitimizing) this exoticizing gaze, and calling attention to and critiquing the larger structures that perpetuate it. In the case of music and literature associated with the *sans-papiers* (‘undocumented individuals’)⁶³ movement in the 1990s, to which I now turn in Chapter 2, the works ‘speak out’ and ‘gaze back’ at the French viewing public, all the while drawing attention to how external forces such as the cultural marketplaces in which they are produced always package the black body as a commodity for consumption. While ‘speaking out’, in other words, the works self-consciously grapple with their own complicity in perpetuating legacies of the same exoticist gazing dynamics. In tracing how the works strike this delicate balance, I also take up the call they offer: to interrogate not just the images of those populations deemed ‘others’ but also the larger frameworks that produce them.

CHAPTER TWO

Self-Spectacularization and Looking Back on French History

Thinking about the display of black bodies in France in the late twentieth century and first decade of the twenty-first conjures two starkly opposed images. The first is that of the well-dressed *sapeur* (a person who, as I discuss more in-depth in Chapter 3, participates in the *société des ambianceurs et des personnes élégantes* cultural phenomenon), whose designer clothing and flashy patterns confirm his (for it was almost exclusively a male phenomenon) narrative of economic success in France. The second, discussed in French news media and political speeches, is that of undocumented immigrants often presented as a homogeneous collectivity. The most striking example of such an image came when, on the morning of August 23, 1996, the French viewing public awoke to a horrifying scene. Overnight, French Prime Minister Alain Juppé had ordered approximately 1,000 CRS (Compagnies républicaines de sécurité; French riot police) agents to enter Paris's St. Bernard church, where a group of 300 men, women, and children of predominantly sub-Saharan African origin had taken up residence.¹ Members of the group called themselves the *sans-papiers*, or 'undocumented individuals', in an effort to draw attention to the fact that, though many had entered the country legally, changes to France's immigration legislation had stripped them of their legal residency permits. In fact, a few were what came to be known as the 'inexpulsables-irrégularisables'—a group which per French law could neither be deported from France nor ever receive permanent residency papers or citizenship—a paradoxical status left in the wake of such sudden and dramatic changes to French legislation.² In the early hours, the CRS agents, who already outnumbered the *sans-papiers* three to one, used tear gas and serious force to remove the protesters. The

French viewing public reacted to the images with outrage and shock at the police tactics and, at least for a brief period, the event brought national attention to the plight of the *sans-papiers*.³

Though each used very different means to achieve it, the *sapeurs* and the *sans-papiers* exhibit a common goal: taking control of their own image through acts of self-spectacularization. Through carefully composed outfits, the *sapeur* seems to counter the images discussed in Chapter 1 that put forth the colonized subject's body (specifically his inability to adopt European fashion) as a sign of his need for surveillance and of his desire for the colonial gift of civilization. *Sapeurs*, by contrast, acquire authentic European designer labels, known as *griffes*.⁴ Moreover, unlike Nénufar who, as discussed in Chapter 1, lacks the self-awareness needed to even recognize his fashion faux-pas in the first place, the *sapeurs* deliberately subvert European fashion norms from within. Wearing his suit too large, for instance, becomes an act that reveals that the *sapeur* has not only mastered European fashion norms, but now creates his own rules.⁵

The *sans-papiers*, for their part, took to French news media in order to craft their own narrative. Originally driven into the shadows as a result of changes to France's immigration and national identity legislation, the *sans-papiers* later sought out the spotlight to distinguish themselves from clandestine migrants who had entered the country illegally or had overstayed their visas. One of the *sans-papiers'* main critiques, advanced by the group's spokesperson, Ababacar Diop, was that France's legislators and media ignored the larger histories of colonization that had paved the way for postcolonial immigration: 'Nous ne sommes pas ici par hasard. Nous sommes ressortissants d'anciennes colonies françaises surexploitées au profit de la métropole' (We're not here by accident. We're immigrants from former French colonies, excessively exploited for the Hexagon's benefit).⁶ By drawing attention to the relationship between colonization and postcolonial immigration, and by highlighting colonized contributions to France, Diop complicates the rigid territorially based claims to national identity that were at the heart of France's immigration debates in the 1980s and 1990s.⁷

At the time, French bookshelves, television screens, and music stores were already brimming with *beur* and *banlieue* narratives promising their audience a glimpse into what life was 'really like' for France's different minorities groups: children of North African immigrants (*beurs*)⁸ and those who inhabited France's socioeconomically disenfranchised outer cities (*banlieues*).⁹ As Mireille Rosello and Kathryn Klepinger have

underscored, journalists and literary critics overwhelmingly promoted those authors who affirmed the correspondence between their literary works and reality, especially those who participated in activism themselves.¹⁰ As Rosello put it, the French publishing industry's move to 'capitaliz[e] on the plight of immigrants' should give us pause about the real impact of the authors' and artists' fictional narratives: 'the most sincere authors find their own agendas complicated by commercial imperatives'.¹¹

The relationship between authors' gestures to 'speak out' and the larger commercial institutions that privileged certain voices and narratives also raises larger questions about the new wave of material depicting sub-Saharan African immigration to France that engaged with narratives put forth by both the *sapeurs* and *sans-papiers*. Most of these works—which Jacques Chevrier has characterized as *migritude* for the way they radically engage with the theme of immigration and explore the marginalization that immigrants suffer from both their home and host communities—paint a bleak portrait of sub-Saharan African immigration to France.¹² Their central protagonists often find themselves in economically exploitative conditions, and some even become participants (willing or not) in criminal activities. Through their works, the authors 'write to right' the two narratives discussed above: they both reveal the *sapeurs'* narratives to be nothing but illusions, and advance the *sans-papiers'* idea critiquing the way in which immigration was presented in France as a phenomenon divorced from larger colonial histories.

Because this book is concerned not only with images, but also with larger questions of display and gazing, I would like to take a step back to consider the extent to which these impulses to spectacularize the self—whether through fashion, news media outlets, fiction, or music—perpetuate or depart from the gazing dynamics of the cultural works associated with the 1931 colonial Exhibition discussed in Chapter 1. Of course, there are clear differences between the 'native performers' and the francophone authors and artists I consider in this chapter. The latter were not *brought* to France to serve as spectacularized representatives of supposedly authentic colonized cultures, nor were they forced to embody particular roles, unlike the 'native performers' on display at the Exhibition. Instead, the authors and artists (like their works' protagonists) moved to France of their own accord, most hoping to settle permanently.¹³

The more one compares the two cases, however, the more thorny questions emerge. In speaking out on behalf of France's sub-Saharan

African immigrant populations, the cultural works of *migrITUDE* and real-life testimonials contested stereotypical images attributed to the racialized body; however, did they not also ultimately reinforce the larger frameworks (like those at the Exposition coloniale) that continue to position racial and ethnic minority bodies as objects of the European gaze? What is more, as many scholars and authors including Alain Mabanckou have rightly underscored, the very act of classifying these works as *migrITUDE*¹⁴ depends on their authors' biographical information (that is, their own immigration to France), and downplays, as Boniface Mongo-Mboussa has pointed out, how immigration has always been a central polemic of francophone African literature.¹⁵ Even though the authors insist that their works are fictional, audiences, critics, and journalists nevertheless read them through autobiographical and sociological lenses and, in so doing, recast the author as a spokesperson for the immigrant community depicted in their works. To echo Rosello's statement quoted above, the French publishing industry capitalizes on immigrants' narratives, and promotes those authors and artists who tackle the larger topics their works discuss (such as racism or discrimination) beyond the confines of their printed literature or recorded music. These larger dynamics, however, suggest that the very act of 'writing to right' might inadvertently place the author, artist, or activist in the role of 'native informant' for European gazing (or reading) subjects. To what extent, then, do the authors and artists participate in reinforcing prevailing narratives? To what extent does their act of self-spectacularization perpetuate the institutionalized spectacularism I am tracing throughout this book?

Far from oblivious to these questions, the literary and musical works I analyze in this chapter address them head-on and grapple self-consciously with their risks and stakes. As my brief overview to what has been termed *migrITUDE* literature suggests, there are dozens of examples I could have chosen in answering the questions I have laid out above. At first glance, the choice to focus my literary inquiry primarily on J. R. Essomba's novel *Le Paradis du Nord* (1996) might seem curious. Where other well-known *migrITUDE* authors such as Alain Mabanckou, Calixthe Beyala, Fatou Diome, and Abdourahman Waberi are regularly invited to participate on literary talk shows, take active roles in founding non-profit organizations (see my discussion of Beyala's group Collectif égalité [Collective Equality] in Chapter 5), or become spokespeople for brands, such as Simon Njami for Moleskine, Essomba rarely speaks out on behalf of sub-Saharan African immigrants

in France, either in interviews or in nonfiction essays. In my view, the relatively scarce critical attention paid to Essomba's *Le Paradis du Nord* confirms Rosello's and Kleppinger's conclusions that journalists and critics alike disproportionately privilege (perhaps inadvertently) those authors who break down the distance between the personal, literary, and political.

Yet this is precisely Essomba's point. In *Le Paradis du Nord* and one of his rare nonfiction works—the essay 'De la Reconnaissance' (1999) ('On Recognition')—Essomba points up how news media and cultural marketplaces legitimize certain stereotypical narratives.¹⁶ Authors who choose to participate risk fueling larger systems designed to objectify francophone authors and promoting the same dynamics they ultimately seek to contest. In fact, Essomba's novel anticipates what Lydie Moudileno later identified as two of the dangers of 'Francophone celebrity': losing his or her agency within the French literary scene, and participating in what Graham Huggan terms the larger 'global "spectacularization" of cultural difference'.¹⁷ Essomba's *Le Paradis du Nord* takes a self-reflexive stance on the machinations of the larger francophone cultural system and both its (and its author's) larger role within it, and thus serves as a useful counterpoint to the many excellent studies of *migritude* literature.

The critiques advanced by the musical works I discuss in this chapter—Salif Keïta's song 'Nou Pas Bouger' (1989), Ivorian *zoblazo* artist Meïway's 'Je suis sans-papiers' (2004), and Manu Chao's 'Clandestino' (1998)—resemble those put forth in *Le Paradis du Nord*. Their abundant allusions to colonization and the slave trade contest the way in which media and political discourse position immigration as a postcolonial phenomenon. They also meditate on the nature of the gaze in their music videos, whose visual composition recalls the ways colonized bodies were put on display as ethnographic spectacles. At the same time as they literally put themselves on display, the artists gaze back at their spectators, which brings the gazing dynamic itself—and the larger forces that legitimize the spectator's right to gaze—under scrutiny.

These works self-consciously grapple with their own complicity in perpetuating the culture of exoticism they ultimately seek to contest. While drawing their audience's attention to both the inaccuracies of widely circulating narratives associating minority bodies with clandestinity and marginalization, and 'righting' the underlying view of postcolonial immigration, they simultaneously ask whether their literary or musical performance nevertheless continues to relegate the artists and minorities they depict in their works to the position of exotic spectacle.

Immigrant, Cargo, or Commodity?

Like other *migritude* works, especially Mabanckou's *Bleu-Blanc-Rouge* (1998) (*Blue White Red*, 2013) and Diome's *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003) (*Belly of the Atlantic*, 2006), *Le Paradis du Nord*'s main narrative reveals what Odile Cazenave has termed the 'miroir aux alouettes' (lark mirror)—the images associating France with opulence—to be an illusion.¹⁸ Drawn north by the siren song equating arrival in France with immediate economic success, the young Cameroonian protagonist Jojo suffers a series of misadventures that quickly transforms this dream into a nightmare. His free will vanishes the moment he boards the cargo ship that will take him to the Spanish coast, and by the end of the novel, Jojo stands trial for rape, murder, and drug trafficking (he is innocent of the first, committed the second to save a woman who would have been killed, and was naïvely unaware of his involvement in the third). Moreover, his expulsion from France will also cause him to stand trial in Cameroon for a murder his travel companion Charlie committed before their departure. Offering a vision of life in France seen through the eyes of those it deems its others, *Le Paradis du Nord* seems, at first glance, to give voice to those individuals who have none, 'writing to right' the narrative that proved Jojo's undoing.

What interests me more about *Le Paradis du Nord*, and what previous studies of this novel have yet to fully examine, is how the novel also 'writes to right' French history itself. Siobhán Shilton, for instance, has productively read *Le Paradis du Nord* as an example of African travel literature, underscoring how Jojo's travel to France reverses the typical gazing dynamics associated with European travel literature, which historically puts exotic lands on display for their European reader.¹⁹ My analysis builds on Shilton's and related studies by revealing not only how the novel deploys Jojo's gaze on France itself, but also showing that the geography and hydrography that define Jojo's journey northward turn the novel's gaze to the larger histories often considered peripheral to—or worse, expunged from—France's national narrative.²⁰ In so doing, the novel contests the institutionalized spectacularism that permeates official historical discourse on which depended France's 1980s and 1990s legislation on immigration and national identity.²¹

In *Le Paradis du Nord*, every segment of Charlie and Jojo's journey north reminds the reader of the previous Atlantic and Mediterranean crossings that laid the foundation for immigration in the 1980s and 1990s. The cargo ship in which the Cameroonians find passage carries

echoes of a slave economy that depends on the objectification of workers, whose labor remains invisible from the shore. In the captain's eyes, the only difference between Charlie and Jojo and the other commodities the ship transports is that the young men consume food. Though Charlie and Jojo paid for their passage, the captain requires that they earn their board through undocumented labor: 'j'ai été payé pour vous transporter [...] mais je n'ai pas été payé pour vous nourrir' (41) (I was paid to transport you [...] but I was not paid to feed you).²² Furthermore, their position as undocumented laborers—whose contributions will never appear in any official records—also recalls the slave and colonial labor whose part in France's prosperity is rarely acknowledged.

After the ship passes through the Strait of Gibraltar, the Cameroonians (as well as three Senegalese migrants who attempt the journey with them) must swim toward a lantern to reach the Spanish coast. When the Cameroonians reach the beach, the smugglers extinguish the lantern, leaving the Senegalese men to continue their marine passage in complete darkness. In the end, only one of the three Senegalese migrants reaches shore alive before the smugglers signal it is time to depart on foot. Essomba's allusion to the two Senegalese bodies suspended within the Mediterranean evokes larger histories of ocean floors littered with other bodies, such as those of slaves cast overboard during the transatlantic trade. The Mediterranean not only becomes a site of passage connecting Africa with Europe, but also, as Iain Chambers puts it, a repository of 'historical memories [...] the very opposite of those systematically catalogued in a national museum'.²³ The emphasis here on water as the guardian of transnational histories subtly contests the territorial claims to national history on which France's immigration and national identity legislation rested.

The middle segment of the immigrants' journey, inside a small compartment underneath a cargo truck carrying oranges, serves as the Cameroonians' own Middle Passage and further concretizes the metaphor connecting slavery to contemporary immigration. The compartment's initial description—'la profondeur [...] ne dépassait pas quarante centimètres [...] et Charlie et Jojo] n'avaient que le choix de deux positions: soit couché à plat ventre, soit couché sur le dos' (50) (it was no more than forty centimeters deep [...] and Charlie and Jojo] had only two positions to choose from: either lying flat on their stomach or flat on their back)—emphasizes an inhumanly restrictive space that carries echoes of the slave ship's hold where, according to Christopher Miller, 'each captive typically had a space below decks approximately

six feet long by sixteen inches wide by two feet seven inches high'.²⁴ Furthermore, not only does the compartment they will occupy for twelve hours restrict their movement, it also constrains their consumption of food and drink. For instance, once they see the compartment for the first time, Charlie and Jojo naïvely ask the smuggler how they will eat, drink, and relieve themselves; he responds by giving them a meager snack, and by telling them that 'vous n'avez qu'à faire dans vos frocs' (50) (you just have to go in your clothes). Imagining the immigrants relieving themselves unquestionably calls to mind descriptions of the slave hold, where slaves, chained to each other and to the ship, had no option but to do the same. This similarity is rendered even more concrete when, 'deux heures après le départ, Jojo vomit tout ce qu'il y avait dans le ventre. Charlie l'imita une trentaine de minutes plus tard' (50) (two hours after their departure, Jojo vomited everything in his stomach. Charlie did the same only thirty minutes later). Beyond the literal connection it establishes between the Cameroonians and slaves, the act of vomiting can be read metaphorically as a figurative regurgitation of history, uniting the processes that led to the dispersal of Africans throughout the past and present. If for Paul Gilroy the ship 'refer[s] us back to the middle passage, to the half-remembered micro-politics of the slave trade and its relationship to both industrialization and modernization',²⁵ the orange truck, carrying the Cameroonians between Spain and France, becomes the quintessential symbol for new orientations of European modernity that rely on immigrant labor.

Once the Cameroonians reach Paris, their lives are characterized by geographical and social exclusion, suggesting that though they can cross the geographical borders that demarcate Europe, other borders remain impermeable—the internal borders within France and even within the immigrant community. Charlie and Jojo are liberated from the compartment only to be drugged, robbed, and left in an underground parking garage in the stolen Mercedes the smugglers used to transport them from Toulouse to Paris. Their subsequent interactions with Parisians—both white and black—reveal racist stereotypical assumptions about sub-Saharan African immigrants promoted by the anti-immigrant discourse that prevailed in the early 1990s. For instance, when Jojo begins to ask a French woman how to get out of the garage, no sooner does he state, 'N'ayez pas ...' (61) (Don't be ...) than she immediately calls out, 'Au secours! au secours! ils veulent me violer! ils veulent me violer!' (61) (Help! Help! They want to rape me! They want to rape me!). The French woman's immediate assumption that Jojo

is a criminal and a rapist harkens back to Mireille Rosello's findings that associations linking blackness to criminality were advanced in 1990s French political discourse and news media.²⁶ Ironically, this interaction pushes the Cameroonians into a life of crime: in order to flee the impending police investigation, the two hide in the back seat of a car and force the female owner to drive them to a metro station.

Ultimately rejected by both French society and their Cameroonian compatriots, Charlie and Jojo have no choice but to sleep in a park for the night. This night is characterized by the quintessential interaction between immigrants and police that for Rosello visually defines immigration in 1990s France.²⁷ When the police arrive, Charlie and Jojo flee, fearing deportation and knowing that they will likely face murder charges in Cameroon. Charlie is caught but Jojo is able to escape by 'plonge[r] dans les eaux noires de la Seine' (85) (diving into the black waters of the Seine). Because the police officers cannot see him, the Seine initially saves Jojo's life; however, the high walls on its banks and swift current quickly render him suicidal:

Il n'avait plus envie de lutter. Il n'était pas un lutteur. Et pourquoi lutter? Ce serait tellement simple si tout s'arrêtait [...]. Ne plus vivre, ne plus courir, ne plus souffrir, mourir. Oui, c'était la solution: mourir!

Il s'arrêta de nager, ferma les yeux, bloqua sa respiration et se laissa couler. (86–87)

(He no longer wished to fight. He was not a fighter. And why fight? It would be so easy if everything just ended [...]. No more living, no more running, no more suffering, death. Yes, that was the solution: death!

He stopped swimming, closed his eyes, held his breath, and let himself go under.)

Just like the Cameroonians' brief plunge into the Mediterranean, the trope of water here imbues this commonplace interaction between police and immigrant with a much larger historical significance, suggesting that what had previously been considered 'tributary histories'²⁸—colonization and the slave trade—are, in fact, central: they flow directly into the heart of Paris. Jojo's resignation to drowning in the Seine underscores the passivity inherent in his entire migratory experience; from his nightly dreams of living in France to being recruited in Charlie's theft, to being stowed away in various modes of transportation, Jojo has been passively swept along established migration networks. Moreover, Jojo's near-lifeless body floating downstream calls to mind other bodies that perished in other bodies of water, both during and

after transnational crossings.²⁹ By associating the Seine—a river existing entirely within France, and which holds a prominent place in French national, literary, and artistic history—with transnational histories, Essomba's novel contests the myopic notions of history underpinning France's immigration reforms of the 1980s and 1990s.³⁰

If the water topos in *Le Paradis du Nord* implicitly situates contemporary sub-Saharan African immigration on a much larger historical trajectory, the novel's final scene, where Jojo stands trial for crimes he did not commit (or committed of necessity or in ignorance) makes this connection explicit. Jojo's case seems straightforward: a young African man surreptitiously enters France, becomes involved in illegal activities, is arrested, and faces expulsion. However, in his closing argument, Jojo's lawyer demands that the jury read Jojo's case through a much longer historical lens, and even suggests that each jury member is just as guilty as Jojo:

Nous sommes allés, et parfois très brutalement, imposer la France chez lui. Pourquoi lui reprocher aujourd'hui d'aimer et de vouloir un peu plus de France? [...] En cette période *riche en commémorations*, il ne me paraît pas déplacé de vous rappeler que l'histoire de ce jeune homme n'est que *la fin tragique de votre histoire d'hier*. Alors avant de prononcer une sentence, dites-vous bien que vous ne pouvez pas le juger sans vous juger. Mais puisque vous devez le juger, faites votre devoir: jugez-le! jugez-vous! (167; emphasis added)

(We went, and sometimes very brutally, to impose France in his land. Why should we now reproach him for loving and wanting to have a bit more of France? [...] In this time *filled with commemorations*, it seems hardly inappropriate to remind you that the history of this young man is nothing more than the *tragic end of your own recent history*. So before delivering your verdict, remind yourself that you cannot judge him without judging yourself. But since you must judge him, do your duty: judge him! Judge yourself!)

Despite its heavy-handedness, this speech near the novel's conclusion calls into question the myopia that dominated discussions of undocumented immigration in the 1980s and 1990s by arguing that postcolonial immigration only represents 'the tragic end' of a much larger history of exploitation. The French lawyer's reference to 'this time filled with commemorations' strikes an ironic tone, particularly in light of the relative absence of events commemorating the sesquicentennial of slavery's abolition in France in 1998, just two years after *Le Paradis du Nord* was published. As Françoise Vergès notes, though the law

proposed by Christiane Taubira to officially designate the transatlantic slave trade a crime against humanity was passed in 2001, it was not until 2005 ‘qu’un débat public s’est développé, relayé par les médias, l’Internet, des intellectuels et des politiques’ (that a public debate developed, transmitted by news media, the Internet, intellectuals, and politicians).³¹ Achille Mbembe has also pointed out the serious resistance to a plurality of memory in France: ‘Relatively belated efforts have been made to symbolically assume responsibility for slavery and abolition. As for the “colonial fracture”, it is still gaping wide’.³² Though Jojo is still ultimately found guilty, the lawyer’s speech transforms the way in which one reads personal immigration narratives by opening up the discursive space in which the larger history of colonization and the slave trade must be resuscitated.

In this way, Essomba’s *Le Paradis du Nord* participates in a larger critique found in colonial and postcolonial francophone works that point out how colonization and the slave trade established pathways that led to contemporary immigration. For instance, one thinks of Ousmane Sembene’s film *La Noire de...* (*Black Girl*), his novel *Le Docker noir* (1973) (*Black Docker*, 1987), and Henriette Akofa’s *Une Esclave moderne* (*A Modern Slave*, 2000), all of which operate on the overarching comparison between postcolonial immigration and modern slavery.³³ Though set primarily in Mali, Abderrahmane Sissako’s film, *La Vie sur terre* (*Life on Earth*, 1999), conspicuously references Aimé Césaire’s *Discours sur le colonialisme* (*Discourse on Colonialism*, 1955) to comment not only on underdevelopment in postcolonial African nations, but also on Dramane’s—one of the film’s main protagonists—immigration to France. Similarly, in Calixthe Beyala’s *Le Petit Prince de Belleville* (*Loukoum: The ‘Little Prince’ of Belleville*, 1992), Abdou Traoré, who only shares his thoughts directly with the reader through epigraphs, announces:

*My country, your forebears know it well. They ripped out its flowers, cut down its forests, ploughed its land to strip it of the red gold of its life. I’m not resentful of them, for I have no body left, no rancour. I am lost. Withered. For once, just leave me alone—renounce your spirit of conquest, of domination, of pleasure. Just for once.*³⁴

Abdou Traoré figuratively ‘looks back’ to French colonization as the source of Abdou’s contemporary suffering in postcolonial France.

These works share more than an interest in resuscitating these marginalized histories and a focus on their continued relevance to

postcolonial immigration. What further unites them, and what becomes the central focus of Jojo's courtroom scene, is a larger meditation on the protagonists' ability to tell their own story. In *La Noire de ...* Diouana has no voice to protest her exploitative working conditions. Dramane never once speaks on screen in *La Vie sur terre*, and his father only speaks to the film's spectator through letters read in voiceover, just as Abdou Traoré only speaks directly to the reader through the epigraphs with which each chapter of *Le Petit Prince de Belleville* begins. By contrast, an overinvestment in insisting on Akofa's ability to tell her own story characterizes Akofa's *Une Esclave moderne* which, as Dominic Thomas points out, not only contains a foreword by Akofa insisting on the narrative's veracity (which for him recalls Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, 1789) but is also 'prefaced by Robert Badinter (a very well-known lawyer and human rights activist), continuing a long tradition of patronage of African texts'.³⁵

In *Le Paradis du Nord*, the courtroom dynamics similarly draw connections between Jojo's voice (or lack thereof) and the larger implications of the novel's own attempts to 'write to right'. Jojo chooses to remain silent during his trial, leaving the responsibility of interpreting his story for the jury to the prosecutor and his defense lawyer. The defense that Jojo's lawyer offers brings to the fore questions of authority inherent in immigrants' self-representation. Before beginning his speech, which I dissected above, Jojo's lawyer preemptively explains his client's silence and assures the jury that it does not reflect a lack of command of French: 'si l'accusé avait bien voulu parler, vous auriez constaté qu'il parle le français aussi bien que vous et moi' (167) (if the accused had wanted to speak, you would have noticed that he speaks French as well as you and I). This need to justify Jojo's choice reveals two underlying assumptions: first, the lawyer believes that in the jury's eyes, Jojo's blackness is synonymous with an inability to speak proper French; second, that the French lawyer is in a position to attest to an African's linguistic abilities.

These stereotypes carry echoes of Ousmane Sembene's novel *Le Docker noir*, which highlights assumptions regarding African immigrants' authorial capacities and, more generally, their ability to speak and write French. In *Le Docker noir*, Diaw Falla stands trial, accused of plagiarizing a white French woman's novel entitled *Le Dernier Voyage du négrier Sirius* (*The Last Voyage of the Slave Ship Sirius*) and subsequently murdering her to cover up the plagiarism.

Though, in reality, the French woman plagiarized Diaw's manuscript, as Dominic Thomas points out, the jury's foregone conclusion of Diaw's guilt is predicated upon stereotypical traits attributed to Africans: 'Diaw could not have written a prize-winning book [...] since such an accomplishment would clearly fall outside the traditional expectations of African performance'.³⁶ What is more, to find Diaw innocent, the French jury must accept not only that he possesses the authorial capabilities to write *Le Dernier Voyage du négrier Sirius*, but also that the French woman would have plagiarized an African author's novel.

This dynamic whereby a member of the majority must endorse the migrant's narrative can be read as a larger indictment of minority authors' positions in literary marketplaces both within and beyond the francophone context. For instance, to be published, early works produced by African Americans, in particular autobiographical slave narratives, not only had to conform to certain expectations in terms of content but this content often had to be authenticated in the form of an introduction by white editors (or sponsors) testifying to the work's veracity.³⁷ This practice, as Carla Peterson points out, raises serious questions regarding both the work's and the author's commodification in a larger literary market:

Slave narrators thus discovered that the autobiographical act, far from freeing them from commodification, tended to reinforce their status as commodities. In writing their lives, [... a]nd, in agreeing to sell their life experiences on the market place, they further *exposed themselves to the gaze of an alien audience*.³⁸

Though these writers sought to author their own stories, they still found themselves bound up in a literary machine that—by the very nature of the types of work that were published and how they were marketed—reinforced images of blackness in the United States. A similar practice has also emerged in the Italian context in the 1990s, where a new group of Italian migrant authors such as Pap Khouma produced semi-autobiographical texts 'co-authored with native Italian speakers, a practice called *scrittura a quattro mani* or "writing with four hands".³⁹ The fact that covers for these works of Italian migrant literature such as Khouma's *Io, venditore di elefanti* (1990) (*I Was an Elephant Salesman: Adventures between Dakar, Paris, and Milan*, 2010) display the name of the Italian co-author alongside that of the migrant author implicitly calls into question both the migrants' linguistic abilities and serves as a legitimizing presence.

These instances of literary sponsorship, a central feature of institutionalized spectacularism in cultural marketplaces, abound in postcolonial literary markets, as Graham Huggan has illustrated in the anglophone world in *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001) and in the francophone world, as Richard Watts demonstrates in *Packaging Post/Coloniality: The Manufacture of Literary Identity in the Francophone World* (2005). Francophone authors, too, were (and continue to be) ‘packaged’ by paratextual images, promotional materials, and, of course, writings. For Watts, the ‘struggle over who has the right to mediate and who maintains the authority to present and interpret this literature is fought’ in the paratext—all of the materials that package a given text.⁴⁰ Yet this struggle is conspicuously absent in *Le Paradis du Nord*; in fact, although Jojo literally authors his own narrative by writing a journal documenting his experiences in France, he gives this journal to his defense lawyer on the condition that he keep it confidential (163). Ultimately Jojo’s defense lawyer keeps this promise, but his gesture to mediate Jojo’s narrative for the jury returns him to a legitimizing and authorial role. Through the courtroom scene, *Le Paradis du Nord* lays bare the existence of this mediation and, in so doing, perhaps opens up space from which it can be challenged. Jojo’s silence, however, also signals the text’s pessimism about the possibilities of escaping the larger system in which black authors—and the texts they produce—are subjected to a legitimizing presence.

It is here that Jojo’s narrative joins Essomba’s. In one of the few nonfiction essays he has written, Essomba critiques the way the French publishing industry serves as a legitimizing force for African narratives, which is worth quoting at length:

pour être reconnu en Afrique, il faut d’abord être plébiscité par Paris, Londres ou New York. [...] On se retrouve finalement dans une situation où l’éditeur, les critiques, les pourvoyeurs de prix, les médias et le premier cercle de lecteurs, toutes ces personnes qui sont déterminantes dans le décollage d’une œuvre, se trouvent être des étrangers. Dans un tel contexte, l’écrivain africain ne sera-t-il pas, d’une certaine manière, contraint à adapter son discours, à arrondir les angles, évitant d’effaroucher ceux qui vont le publier et qui ont peur des miroirs, rassurant ceux qui veulent le lire mais tremblant de rencontrer leur mauvaise conscience au détour d’une page ? Même si dans cet exercice l’écrivain arrive parfois, du point de vue littéraire, à des résultats très satisfaisants, la substance n’est pas d’origine ; on a triché, on s’est quelque peu prostitué.⁴¹

(To be recognized in Africa, one must first be approved by Paris, London,

or New York. [... O]ne finds oneself in a situation where the editor, critics, suppliers, media, and the first round of readers, all these people who determine whether a work will be launched, are foreigners. In such a context, is not the African writer in a certain sense constrained to adapt his or her speech, to smooth out the rough edges, to avoid frightening those who will publish it and who are afraid of mirrors, reassuring those who want to read it but tremble at the thought of encountering their own guilty conscience leaping through its pages? Even if in this exercise the writer sometimes, from a literary point of view, arrives at very satisfactory results, the substance is not original; one has cheated; one has prostituted oneself somewhat.)

Essomba's critique lays bare the larger tensions between agency and censorship that define African authorship. What is more, it also reveals a paradox that other authors—notably Alain Mabanckou, as I discuss in Chapter 3—critique as well: the way such highly mediated narratives become marketed as 'authentically African'.

As I discussed in the chapter's opening, it is this very framework that became the target of the *sans-papiers* protesters, who, unlike Jojo, sought to speak on their own behalf and make themselves visible in a context where others (such as journalists and politicians) spoke about and for them. Similarly, the musical works to which I now turn actively affirm marginalized positions to challenge the homogenizing discourse about late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century immigration in France.

Voicing Black Atlantic History

As James Winders discusses in *Paris Africain: Rhythms of the African Diaspora* (2006), Salif Keïta not only had ideological reasons for opposing changes to France's immigration legislation, he was also personally affected by it, having experienced 'the kinds of administrative humiliations to which African immigrants could be subjected'.⁴² Speaking out against these types of injustice is one of the many roles (including acting as a *porte-parole* for his community, a mediator between populations during disputes, and a guardian of his population's oral history) that a traditional Malian *griot*⁴³ such as Keïta fulfills for his community.⁴⁴ His song 'Nou Pas Bouger', which, as its title announces, defiantly asserts immigrants' and their descendants' rights to remain in France, prefigured the *sans-papiers* protest by seven years, demonstrating the

lengthy period during which discussions of these legislative changes remained at the fore in France.

In terms of musical composition, the 1989 version of ‘Nou Pas Bouger’ deftly weaves together traditional African rhythm and instrumentation with global 1980s sounds, creating a musical genealogy attesting to the intertwined nature of French and African history and culture. Though Keïta’s traditional *griot*-style singing in Bambara later announces the song’s West African roots, the instrumentation of the song’s opening situates it squarely within 1980s rock music: a synthesized keyboard sound plays before drums from a drum kit join in, followed closely by an electric bass, two guitars, and a horn section (a keyboard will join later). Next, the two more traditionally African elements—Keïta’s vocal track and a *balafon*—enter. The song’s triplet rhythm accentuates its upbeat and optimistic, but forceful, tone and its two-against-three polyrhythm highlights its West African roots, while simultaneously placing it within a more global 1980s soundscape, which relied heavily on polyrhythms. Musically, the song asserts an African perspective, yet is very much anchored in global 1980s sounds, underscoring the ways in which European and African cultures can productively come together.

Just as the music itself suggests how African and European cultures are inextricably linked, the song’s lyrics evoke two types of historical interconnectedness—Africans’ service to France and the continued postcolonial European presence in Africa—to question France’s exclusionary immigration policies. The song’s opening lines insist upon the physical labor that the African body provided, without which European imperial expansion would not have been possible: ‘From the time of slavery / The black man have [*sic*] toiled / The black men have suffered / The black men have sweated blood’.⁴⁵ In these lyrics, the reference to blood not only reminds the listener of the harsh realities faced by slaves and colonized subjects, but it also calls into question rigid racially, historically, and even biologically based conceptions of national identity (which, as I illustrate in Chapter 5, continue to surface in twenty-first-century France). Keïta’s role as a *griot*, whose other primary responsibility is to recount the genealogy of his people, is significant: the slaves’ blood to which Keïta alludes reinforces the genealogical connection between the African diaspora and Africa—a product of the forced circulation of the transatlantic slave trade. However, because it is shed in service of the French empire, this blood also asserts a genealogical link between France and Africa; in other words, because of their service, Africans form an integral branch of France’s genealogical

tree. These lyrics, then, offer an alternative genealogy of France that calls into question the distinction between French and foreigner that will form the basis for 1980s and 1990s immigration reforms.

The lyrics underscore how processes of labeling and naming continue to matter, contesting the association between racial and ethnic minorities and ‘foreigners’. The lyrics point out, for instance, that though France’s borders remain closed to migrants, France nevertheless maintains a postcolonial presence as ‘foreigners’ in Africa. Keïta sings, ‘Independence has arrived / There are white men everywhere / There are white men in Africa’.⁴⁶ Yet, despite the fact that non-African populations persist in Africa after independence, African immigrants who have been living in France for years are violently expelled:

The CRS are everywhere
They only use violence and nothing else
To move us on
[...]
Every day they call the police
Every day there are arrests
Every day people are taken back home by ‘plane’.⁴⁷

By insisting upon the historical intersections of France and Africa, and by contrasting Europeans’ continued presence in Africa with Africans’ exclusion in Europe, Keïta’s lyrics strike at the underlying assumptions that formerly colonized subjects do not belong in France because they have no claim to French history.

Similarly, the song’s video visually references how the black body was conscripted into forced service for France and places slavery and colonization into dialog with postcolonial immigration. Though these devices are present throughout the video, the opening scene illustrates them particularly well. Unlike the CD track, the ‘Nou Pas Bouger’ video begins with the chorus, and the video’s first shot, which corresponds to the chorus’s first four beats, begins with a close-up of black feet walking rhythmically from the right of the screen to the center of the shot, taking a step on each down beat (Figure 4).

Once the feet reach the center of the shot, they remain there, but continue to march in place on each down beat. The dancer’s clothing—a dark grass skirt—is partially visible around the dancer’s legs, and both his feet and clothing stand in stark contrast to the white background. Hand-drawn white lines emphasize the contrast between black and white, and also obscure a clear view of the dancer’s feet. The second



Figure 4: African dancer in the opening shot of the video for Salif Keita's 1989 version of 'Nou Pas Bouger', directed by Michael Meyer of Wonder Products.

shot begins with a jump cut to a close-up of the dancer's top half; his wooden, elongated mask surrounded by dark strands similar to those from the dancer's skirt looks quickly from screen left to screen right, before this image fades out to that of a bright object in the center of the screen. Finally, in the third shot, the image of the bright object fades out to a medium close-up of a person's torso, dressed in green, with his or her hands handcuffed in front. As s/he moves from the right to the left of the screen, four more handcuffed bodies follow. Their dark clothing makes their handcuffed arms the prominent focus of the shot.

Using close-ups to frame the video's opening reduces the black body to symbolic constitutive parts and serves two complementary purposes. First, it suggests that these individuals—particularly those who are handcuffed—are not understood as human beings, but rather as a faceless collectivity. Second, it evokes the way the African body was historically seen as an ensemble of parts that could serve the colonial empire. In *Littératures africaines francophones des 1980 et 1990 (Francophone African Literatures of the 1980s and 1990s)*, Lydie Moudileno notes that several body parts, including skin, feet, the male torso, blood, and the womb play prominent symbolic roles in sub-Saharan African literary

productions before 1980.⁴⁸ For her, each of these body parts functions metonymically; references to feet, for instance:

signal[e]nt tantôt l'acculturation (pied entravé dans la chaussure, pied botté du tirailleur, pied sur l'asphalte de la ville), tantôt la reculturation (pied nu en contact avec la terre natale, pied nu de la danse ancestrale).⁴⁹

(sometimes signal acculturation [foot shackled by a shoe, booted foot of the colonial soldier, foot on the city's asphalt], and sometimes getting back to one's roots [bare foot in contact with the native land, bare feet performing an ancestral dance].)

In the music video, the feet perform a dance reminiscent of 'traditional' African culture, yet in light of the larger context of the song's lyrics—which assert immigrants' right to be in France given the longer history of exploitation—they can also be read as affirming belonging, claiming the *jus soli* that had been revoked just four years later.⁵⁰ That the background contains no referent definitively placing the video in either France or Africa also suggests a doubly marginalized space, outside of both France and Africa, where the immigrants and their descendants reside physically and psychologically. Just as Jojo finds himself excluded from both African and French communities in France, and eventually inhabits a squat in *Le Paradis du Nord*, so too do the individuals in 'Nou Pas Bouger' inhabit a space outside of presumed French national identity, marginalized both legally and discursively.

The handcuffed arms and torsos closely following each other in a line across the screen visually reference the many clandestine immigrants who were deported from France, but they also evoke earlier moments of colonization and slavery when these body parts were forced into service for France. In fact, a later shot from the video makes this history of servitude explicit: approximately one minute into the video, a shackled line of feet marches slowly from left to right across the screen. Juxtaposing these restraints from different historical periods within the same video produces a parallel underscoring the song's critique of French immigration policy: even though colonized subjects were formerly forced into service for the French empire, they are now being excluded from citizenship within the former colonial power.

Finally, 'Nou Pas Bouger' builds on the courtroom scene in *Le Paradis du Nord*, which exposed the ways French mediators speak for black authors and their works. The multiethnic chorus (Figure 5) and images of fluid borders in 'Nou Pas Bouger' suggest the possibility that a plurality of voices can be expressed—and heard—in France.⁵¹ On the



Figure 5: Multi-ethnic chorus in Keïta's 1989 version of 'Nou Pas Bouger', directed by Michael Meyer of Wonder Products.

surface, this scene's chromatic binary between black and white seems to mirror the way in which France's immigration debates were figured in implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) racial terms: the chorus's all-black attire stands out sharply against the white background and fabric, as do the shadows cast back onto the fabric. The lighting, however, reduces the overall contrast, and can be read as a critique of the larger discourse surrounding the immigration 'crisis': though it had been framed in very clear, oppositional terms—that is, depicted as a question of 'black' and 'white'—in reality, the video suggests that the debate needed far greater nuance. In this way, the 'Nou Pas Bouger' video anticipates the *sans-papiers* protest, which Rosello describes as a 'new authoring principle, a group of individuals who managed to impose a new grid of intelligibility, and to suggest that a much more nuanced response to their fate was both desirable and possible'.⁵²

In addition to targeting the specifically racial binarisms that pervaded (and, as I trace in Chapter 5, still persist in twenty-first-century France) the discussion of immigration in France, the multicultural chorus scenes of the video for 'Nou Pas Bouger' also call into question the impulse to divide populations in the first place. In these scenes, the chorus is divided into three rows, each of which stands on a different level of a riser. At

several moments during the video, a wide strip of sheer white fabric is raised between the rows, separating the chorus's members. Though the sheer white fabric does obscure certain chorus members, it never completely hides them from the camera's view, and, in fact, the shadows cast back onto the fabric by the rows behind it make their partial absence visible. What is more, the fabric does not obscure their voices—their oral presence—in the least. Beyond symbolizing the arbitrary divisions between people that are at the heart of the immigration discourse, the shadows and the presence of the voices also suggest the presence of additional narratives.

Echoes of the *Sans-Papiers*

If Keïta's 'Nou Pas Bouger' stands as an affirmation of belonging that anticipates the way the *sans-papiers* claimed their right to self-representation in 1996, Manu Chao's 'Clandestino' (1998) and Meïway's 'Je suis sans-papiers' (2004) as their titles suggest, reclaim the *sans-papiers* identity in the years following the St. Bernard church affair to highlight the continued struggles of immigrants and their descendants in France. Comparing how each song strategically embodies this marginalized position through close analysis of their lyrics, vocal delivery, and, above all, their videos, reveals how they engage in self-spectacularization to put the marginalized migrant on display for the viewer. In both videos, the artist speaks on behalf of (and, in Meïway's case, *as*) migrants and their descendants in contemporary France. Ultimately, their gazing and speaking dynamics raise further questions regarding the larger frameworks that control these attempts to 'give voice to' and to 'make visible' these populations.

Born in France to parents who fled Franco's Spain, Manu Chao has had great success in the French and international popular music scenes. From 1987 to 1994, Chao was one of the principal members of the alternative French rock group Mano Negra (Black Hand, which refers to undeclared work), whose aesthetic drew from a variety of sources, including French *chanson*-style singing, ska, rock, reggae, and salsa. After the group's dissolution, Chao traveled extensively in South and Central America, and released what he expected to be a demo EP that would begin and end his solo career, *Clandestino*.⁵³ Much to his surprise, the record met with great success and sold over 3 million copies (2 million outside France).

Overall, the title track's lyrics (in Spanish) paint in broad brushstrokes the journey of an undocumented immigrant as he, like Jojo in *Le Paradis du Nord*, passes through the Strait of Gibraltar ('entre Ceuta y Gibraltar') to seek refuge in the Global North ('una ciudad del norte'). Though the song's very first line announces a decidedly first-person perspective and positions immigration as a solitary journey ('solo voy con mi pena' [I go alone with my pain]), this migratory experience is anything but unique. During the chorus, Chao lists a variety of nationalities ('peruano', 'africano', 'argelino', 'nigeriano', and 'boliviano', [Peruvian, African, Algerian, Nigerian, and Bolivian]), suggesting the universality of this experience. The lyrics offer few concrete details regarding the journey itself, instead focusing on the *clandestino's* nomadic existence ('correr es mi destino' [to move from place to place is my destiny]) and the labels ascribed to such populations, most notably when Chao uses the passive voice to proclaim, 'me dicen el clandestino' (they call me the clandestine one). The song's lyrics highlight how, though these individuals come from a variety of backgrounds, ultimately, forces beyond their control (be they governments, individuals, or other associations) label and classify them homogeneously into one group located outside of the national boundaries and opposed to a homogeneous 'us'.

The song's official video compounds, rather than neatly resolves, this tension between individuality and universality announced by the lyrics. Its staging is simple, alternating medium shots of Chao singing with close-up shots of silent individuals who often stare back at the camera. Chao's shots are primarily set in front of a sun motif, while shots of the individuals are primarily set in front of an undifferentiated, out-of-focus crowd. During these individual shots, the video foregrounds individuals and families from a variety of different national backgrounds; they hail from the Americas, Africa, and Asia. The act of bringing them to the foreground and then returning them to the undifferentiated mass visually mirrors the lyrics' shifts between individuality and universality. The video also reflects on the act of 'labeling'. Many of the individuals and groups hold up their identifying documents, ranging from stamped passports to birth certificates, family photos, and even barcodes. In speaking out on behalf of this group and in seeking to make these individuals' stories heard, however, the song nevertheless falls into one of the very traps it seeks to combat. Though the lyrics and images make gestures to interrogate the universalizing and stereotypical narratives inscribed onto the migrant experience, they make limited efforts to give voice to these diverse experiences. In fact, the video gives voice only

to Chao, reinforcing, as Barbara Lebrun notes, ‘the role of Western artists as adequate spokespersons’⁵⁴—a notion that she and I both find problematic.

At the same time, however, the video draws the viewer’s attention to the visual dynamics that position the racial and ethnic minority as the silent object of the European gaze. As I pointed out above, the individuals cast as migrants often stare directly into the camera. In so doing, they destabilize the spectators’ comfortable gazing position and challenge them to reflect on the processes that legitimize their gaze. As I now trace, the video to Meipay’s ‘Je suis sans-papiers’ similarly ‘gazes back’ at its spectators to expose and ultimately contest these gazing dynamics.

Whereas Chao speaks out *on behalf of* migrants in ‘Clandestino’, Ivorian *zoblazo* artist Meipay strategically embodies the *sans-papier* position to speak *from* this subject position in ‘Je suis sans-papiers’. Musically, ‘Je suis sans-papiers’ is a doleful ballad that departs from Meipay’s upbeat dance-style *zoblazo* aesthetic. Moreover, unlike the other two songs examined in this chapter, which weave their narrative of *métissage* into their musical compositions (drawing on instrumentation and rhythms from a variety of cultural backgrounds), the musical composition of ‘Je suis sans-papiers’ is anything but ‘exotic’—its instrumentation includes a saxophone, synthesized piano, vocals, and sparse percussion.

Like *Le Paradis du Nord* and ‘Nou Pas Bouger’, ‘Je suis sans-papiers’ affirms former colonial subjects’ belonging in France by reading postcolonial immigration on the same historical trajectory as slavery and colonization. In so doing, it reconceptualizes French national history through a transnational lens, interrogating rigid notions of national identity. Lyrically, ‘Je suis sans-papiers’ uses a metaphor of homelessness to describe not only the clandestine immigrant’s life in France, but also the postcolonial African condition more generally.⁵⁵ For instance, Meipay proclaims, ‘J’étais bien chez moi / sous mon petit toit / Tu es venu chez moi / Tu m’as imposé ta loi’ (I was fine in my land / under my little roof / You came to my land / You imposed your law on me).⁵⁶ Later, he reinforces how immigrants’ legal and cultural marginalization is an outgrowth of this history: ‘Immigré chez toi / Je suis exclu par ta loi / Sans-papiers, je suis sans-papiers’ (Immigrant in your land / I am excluded by your laws / Undocumented, I am undocumented).⁵⁷ The anaphora of the terms ‘chez moi’ and ‘chez toi’—phrases with which half of the song’s French lines end—underscores the theme of

belonging and emphasizes the paradoxical state of the postcolonial subject, who no longer has a home to call 'chez moi', but is rejected from the *métropole*. Moreover, this link between colonization, homelessness, and immigration also orients the music video, encouraging the viewer to read the protagonist's homelessness (indicated in scenes where Meiway is depicted sleeping on the ground or begging in front of the metro) historically. The song therefore suggests not only that the immigrant's economic situation is caused by imbalances of power originating in colonial exploitation, but also that the immigrant's literal homelessness can be seen as a metaphor for the postcolonial condition: Europe metaphorically stole his home through its colonial project.

Both the repeated informal second-person pronoun 'tu' and Meiway's chilling gaze, pointed directly into the camera, implicate the listener directly in this history. The first four lines cited above, in particular, lend an accusatory tone to this discussion of French colonial history and recall other *migrITUDE* works such as *Le Paradis du Nord* or Abdou Traoré's epigraphs in Calixthe Beyala's *Le Petit Prince de Belleville* discussed above. At the same time, however, this accusatory tone risks perpetuating the binarisms that, as Pascal Blanchard notes, characterize discussions of how to acknowledge colonial history in contemporary France.⁵⁸ Despite the potential pitfalls of such a tone, Meiway's lyrics nevertheless encourage viewers to recognize their nation's historical role in contributing to the conditions leading to immigration to France.

In terms of visual composition, several of the music video's scenes are filmed through vertical bars, reminding the viewer of clandestine immigrants' imprisonment and deportation. This composition also recalls moments when the colonized subject's body was put on display in 'human zoos',⁵⁹ such as the Exposition coloniale discussed in Chapter 1. In this way, the camera's gaze in 'Je suis sans-papiers' is a concrete example of how, as George Lipsitz has put it, 'ethnic cultures accustom themselves to a bifocality reflective of both the ways that they view themselves and the ways they are viewed by others'.⁶⁰ Beyond simply conjuring these stereotypical images of black bodies, however, this scene's bifocality is strengthened through Meiway's gaze directed at the spectator through the red metal bars (Figure 6). By staring into the camera at the presumed spectators, Meiway acknowledges, but also simultaneously questions, his position as a spectacle. His look back at the audience can be read as a self-reflexive gesture that demonstrates an awareness that in speaking out he might be perpetuating reigning stereotypes about African immigrants.⁶¹ Furthermore, his stare makes



Figure 6: Ivorian artist Meïway staring through vertical bars in the video for 'Je suis sans-papiers'.

his viewers aware of their own impulse to gaze, pushing them to interrogate the underlying power dynamic behind their authority to do so. This perspective harkens back to Jojo's lawyer in *Le Paradis du Nord*, who, though he explains how Jojo differs from the stereotypes about African immigrants, nevertheless does not critically analyze the framework whereby he is authorized—and, in fact, feels compelled—to explain the black, mute body.

Looking Back, Speaking Out: *Porte-paroles*, Artists, and the Gaze

Ultimately, the literary and musical works I have examined in this chapter seek to give voice to one of France's most vulnerable populations: immigrants. Each one interrogates the discriminatory immigration and national identity laws passed in late twentieth-century France by interrogating the historical myopia without which they could not exist. Specifically, each work—whether through the topos of water (*Le Paradis du Nord*), musical composition ('Nou Pas Bouger'), or imagery of the black body under surveillance (*Le Paradis du Nord*, 'Clandestino', and 'Je suis sans-papiers')—repositions postcolonial immigration to France as but one point on a much longer trajectory of exploitation. By evoking the histories of colonization and of the slave trade, the artists I have

considered reframe the terms of the immigration debate, asserting their own power, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot has put it, to 'define what is and what is not a serious object of research and, therefore, of mention'.⁶² In so doing, they challenge France to recognize both its own role in forging the connections that contributed to immigrants' travel to France and these populations' belonging in the postcolonial *métropole*. Though these connections may seem obvious, they are often overlooked and it is therefore essential to resuscitate them when discussing contemporary migratory flows.⁶³

Evoking these histories in the context of immigration, however, has a much larger significance that reaches beyond the immediate historical context of 1980s and 1990s France. By resuscitating histories of colonization and the slave trade in conjunction with immigration and national identity debates, these works anticipate France's memorial turn in the mid-2000s (illustrated *inter alia* by the inauguration of the CNHI, the Musée du Quai Branly, and the passing of the Loi du 23 février). As Blanchard asserts, recognizing these histories—though difficult—is essential in France's increasingly multicultural society:

L'enjeu est de taille: soit le *fait colonial* trouvera sa place dans le présent, soit les frustrations deviendront *mythologies* et accentueront les césures de la société française.⁶⁴

(The stakes are high: either colonial history will find its place in the present, or the resulting frustrations will become *myths* and accentuate the fractures of French society.)

Ultimately, these literary and musical works pluralize notions of national history and memory in late twentieth-century France.

By laying the groundwork for this memorial project, works such as *Le Paradis du Nord*, 'Nou Pas Bouger', 'Clandestino', and 'Je suis sans-papiers' have opened up new discussions in which these histories can be challenged. Yet, at the same time, these works all grapple with the questions of (self-)representation that emerged during the *sans-papiers* crisis. By underscoring parallels between the histories of colonization, slavery, and postcolonial immigration, to what extent do the works discussed above suggest that these histories are foundational for all descendants of immigrants in France? The works I discuss in subsequent chapters—particularly Léonora Miano's *Blues pour Élise*, studied in Chapter 4—will contest this very idea.⁶⁵ Moreover, in drawing attention to this population's experiences, to what extent are the authors and artists legitimating their own voice as spokesperson? Finally, by way of

'looking back' both literally at their audience and figuratively on French history, the works consider whether they themselves are complicit in perpetuating the prevalent associations between blackness, clandestinity, and economic marginalization.

As I explore in the following chapters, more recent francophone works, including Alain Mabanckou's *Black Bazar* (2009), Léonora Miano's *Blues pour Élise* (2010), and Saïd Bouamama and rap group Z.E.P.'s *Devoir d'Insolence* (2010), draw attention to and self-consciously grapple with the precise risks on which these questions are predicated. Establishing a teleological relationship between the slave trade, colonization, immigration, and issues of race and national identity in contemporary France risks suggesting that these historical moments continue to be central for all racial and ethnic minority populations. Moreover, these more recent works take a self-reflexive stance on their own complicity in perpetuating institutionalized spectacularism in cultural marketplaces.

CHAPTER THREE

Writing, Literary *Sape*, and Reading in Mabanckou's *Black Bazar*

Even after the rise of works which seem to 'write to right' images of France as a sort of El Dorado studied in the previous chapter, these images nevertheless continued to flourish in francophone literary and musical works throughout the early twenty-first century. In fact, an African music movement known as *coupé-décalé*, was born in 2002 out of this precise image. *Coupé-décalé* is curious as an African musical movement for two principal reasons: first, it began in Paris rather than in Africa; and second, its first real group, known as the 'Jet Set'—a play on words referring to both the number of members (seven), and their opulent lifestyle—had no musical training or experience. Rather, this group, according to one of its members known as Lino Versace, was known in Parisian African circles for their opulent weekend outings, including their designer clothing, cigars, champagne, and convertibles.¹ When, in 2002, a violent civil war broke out in Côte d'Ivoire, African music producer David Monsoh approached the group to ask if they would consider creating a music movement to send messages of hope to the war-torn nation; though all but Douk Saga (self-proclaimed 'President' of *coupé-décalé*) initially declined Monsoh's invitation, Saga quickly convinced the rest of the Jet Set to join him in the studio.²

Coupé-décalé began as a means of spreading positive messages to a war-torn Côte d'Ivoire, but the conflict also played a large role in the movement's widespread success. During the civil war, government officials instituted a curfew, and Ivorians preferred to spend their curfew hours in bars (known as *maquis*)³ rather than remain isolated at home. The images of opulence transmitted through *coupé-décalé* music videos contrasted greatly with the chaos and violence Ivorians experienced in their everyday life and, as Dominic Kohlhagen concluded, cultivated a

mythical notion of ‘ailleurs’ (elsewhere)—often associated with images of France—that allowed Ivorians to escape their daily realities, even if for a short while.⁴

Yet, like the *migrITUDE* works (primarily Alain Mabanckou’s *Bleu-Blanc-Rouge*) that had contested similar images *sapeurs* had put forth equating life in France with economic success, other Ivorian musicians, particularly the *zouglou* group Magic System, took issue with the images *coupé-décalé* transmitted of France. In their song ‘Un Gaou à Paris’, (‘An Idiot in Paris’), for instance, Magic System describes the plight of a young African immigrant who, buying in to the myth of France as an El Dorado, travels there only to suffer marginalization and impoverishment, and is ultimately pursued by the police.⁵ In the estimation of lead singer Asalfo, continuing to orient young Ivorians’ gaze northward and equating ‘success’ with arrival in France, continues the vicious circle of immigration.⁶

A closer look at *coupé-décalé*, however, reveals that the narrative it advances is more complex than first meets the eye. Specifically, its lyrics, sung in an Ivorian street slang known as *nouchi*, articulate a multivalenced critique of colonization that complements the images of opulence its artists put forth.⁷ As Yacouba Konate points out, *nouchi* draws on English and Ivorian languages, but also deliberately redefines French words.⁸ In the *coupé-décalé* context, three French words are of particular importance: ‘couper’, ‘décaler’, and ‘travailler’, each of which corresponds to a dance movement. ‘Couper’, which literally means ‘to cut’ in French (and is therefore coupled with a cutting motion of the arm)⁹ means ‘to steal’ in *nouchi*. ‘Décaler’, meaning ‘to shift’ in French, signifies ‘to return back to one’s country’ in *nouchi*, and ‘travailler’ (to work), means ‘to show off one’s wealth ostentatiously’. *Coupé-décalé* performances often take place in clubs, where prominent DJs, who play the role of host, sing the praises of artists and other club VIPs. In the *coupé-décalé* context, this act is referred to as an *atalaku*, a Lingala term conspicuously borrowed from the Congolese *soukous* music context, where it refers to the person (either DJ or host) doing the praise singing, rather than the act itself.¹⁰ In order to prove the DJ’s *atalaku* true, the artists perform *danses des griffes* (showing off their clothes’ designer labels) and shower the DJ with bank notes (‘travailler’ or ‘travaillement’). Coupling the Jet Setteurs’ images of opulence (designer labels, cigars, champagne, etc.) with these lyrics, one discovers a multivalenced critique of colonization. Journalists have celebrated the Jet Setteurs as ‘Robin Hoods’ of neocolonialism, suggesting that they travel to

France, ‘cut’ what is rightfully theirs, ‘shift’ back to Côte d’Ivoire, and redistribute the wealth to Ivorians (‘travailler’).¹¹ Yet, as one might expect, because these words are all intelligible to French audiences, and nothing indicates their hidden meaning, this multivalenced narrative packs an additional punch: this narrative evades detection by audiences only familiar with French and not *nouchi*.

The title to Franco-Congolese author Alain Mabanckou’s short story ‘Propos coupés-décalés d’un nègre presque ordinaire’ (‘Cut and Shifted Remarks of an Almost Ordinary Negro’) conspicuously references *coupé-décalé*—an allusion that not only draws cultural connections between the Ivorian music movement and Mabanckou’s literary work, but also subtly hints at the way the short story (like *coupé-décalé*) advances its own multilayered narrative using its literary form.¹² In ‘Propos coupés-décalés’, published in *Télérama* magazine in 2006, like Mabanckou’s 2009 novel *Black Bazar*, which is based on it, the anonymous narrator advances polemical views about his fellow ‘black French’ compatriots, as well as about Africans more generally, while simultaneously alluding to dozens of works by French and francophone authors and artists to support his claims. While the short story conspicuously draws attention to some allusions, others are only visible to those with the requisite cultural background to identify them. Just as *Coupé-décalé* artists advance hidden narratives only discernable to those who understand *nouchi* words’ multiple meanings, Mabanckou similarly advances hidden narratives through these allusions—a formal technique I term ‘literary sape’—in both ‘Propos coupés-décalés’ and *Black Bazar*.

On its surface, *Black Bazar* (like the short story on which it is based) seems to participate in the larger trend of ‘writing to right’ explored in the previous chapter. What *Black Bazar* ‘rights’, so to speak, is the very idea that emerges out of the *migritude* works discussed in Chapter 2: the implicit and automatic association between racial and ethnic minorities in France, immigration (likely clandestine), marginalization, and criminality. The individuals who make up *Black Bazar*’s ‘Black France’ differ not only from this relatively monolithic portrait in terms of their nationality and immigration status (some are French-born—both Antillean and hexagonal—while others, born in West and Central Africa, have immigrated to France), but also from one another in terms of their views on racial identity.

This image of ‘Black France’ that *Black Bazar* ‘writes to right’ is also supported by the way it gives its reader access to this heterogeneous community: through the (auto)ethnographic writings of its

narrator-author named Fessologue (rendered ‘Buttologist’ in the English translation by Sarah Ardizzone), who, like Charlie in *Le Paradis du Nord* or Massala-Massala in *Bleu-Blanc-Rouge*, seems to serve as a native informant for the reader, giving an insider’s view into how life ‘really is’ for racial and ethnic minority and immigrant populations in early twenty-first-century France. In fact, Fessologue seems to take pride in his objective perspective: though other characters heatedly debate what it means to be black in contemporary France—even to the point of hurling insults at each other—Fessologue merely records these conversations in his notebooks (which ultimately becomes his novel, also entitled *Black Bazar*), refusing to either participate in the moment, or even to add his own thoughts when he revisits his journals to write the novel. Even when Hippocrate (‘Mr. Hippocratic’), Fessologue’s Martinican neighbor, invites him for drinks with the express purpose of telling him how both sub-Saharan Africans and blacks in France more generally are ungrateful for the colonial gifts they received, Fessologue listens silently but does not respond (either in the moment or retroactively).

Yet, as I illustrate below, this seeming objectivity or refusal to engage politically is merely a façade that Fessologue deploys to call into question the very position of ‘minority-author-as-native-informant’ itself. Far from a passive observer, Fessologue actively intervenes in the debates he records (themselves proxies for debates taking place in contemporary cultural criticism, especially in the realm of *francophonie*) through two types of writing: figurative writing using fashion (associated with the Congolese *sape* movement), and literal writing using fiction. Using both fashion *sape* and what I term ‘literary *sape*’, *Black Bazar* deftly exposes the cultural institutionalized spectacularism that permeates the literary and cultural marketplaces. Just as Fessologue the *sapeur* composes his outfits and then reads them for his audience using *danses des griffes*, so too does Fessologue the author deploy *literary griffes*—hundreds of references to literary, musical, and filmic works as well as political debates—to draw readers’ attention to the lenses through which they read *Black Bazar* itself. Analyzing Fessologue’s literary *sape*, then, reveals how he actually participates in the same debates about blackness and black authorship he seems to simply record.

Through its literary *sape*, the novel points up the problematic reading strategies engendered by these cultural marketplaces, including the way they perpetuate the idea that there exist certain prescribed roles open to minority authors (such as engaged spokesperson for his or her community or native informant responsible for relating authentic

African or diasporic experiences to his or her reader) and that authors and artists who fail to occupy these roles are ‘sellouts’. Additionally, Fessologue’s sartorial and literary *sape* in *Black Bazar* slyly and preemptively critique the larger frameworks of the cultural marketplaces in which the novel itself circulates. Through them, the novel contests the logic underpinning the taxonomy *francophonie*—which largely depends on biographical information about the authors classified thusly—and the way it primes audiences to approach the works through autobiographical and ethnographic, rather than literary, lenses. Ultimately, then, *Black Bazar* uses writing to expose and subvert the very same reading strategies to which it is subjected (cultural institutionalized spectacularism) from within.

Reading Authorship and *Francophonie* in *Black Bazar*

If the works examined in Chapter 2 center on ‘writing to right’, *Black Bazar* engages writing to read the act of reading itself. Reading both others’ bodies and actions, and minority authors and their works occupies much of *Black Bazar*’s characters’ time. Whether explicitly about authorship or not, I contend that it is through these discussions that *Black Bazar* explores the problematic reading strategies to which francophone authors and their works are subjected in the cultural arena. Ultimately, it is to these reading strategies that the novel’s literary *sape* will respond.

A discussion about how minority authors and their works are read opens *Black Bazar*, indicating this subject’s centrality to the novel. In the prologue, Fessologue speaks with another character known as ‘Roger the French-Ivorian’ about the book he has just completed (also entitled *Black Bazar*), and the questions Roger poses about Fessologue’s novel reveal that not only does he harbor a latent association between true writers and whiteness (13–14, 7–8),¹³ he also mentally classifies works originally published in French by minority authors alongside those by foreign authors originally published in other languages (subsequently translated into French). He asks, for instance, whether the novel has ‘une mer et un vieil homme qui va à la pêche avec un petit garçon’ (15) (‘a sea and an old man who goes fishing with a young boy’, 8), ‘un ivrogne qui va dans les pays des morts pour retrouver son tireur de vin de palme décédé accidentellement au pied d’un palmier’ (18) (‘a drunkard who goes to the land of the dead to find his palm wine supplier who

accidentally died at the foot of a palm tree?', 11), or even 'un grand amour au temps du choléra entre un pauvre télégraphiste et une jeune écolière qui finira plutôt par épouser un médecin plus tard' (18) ('a great love that takes place in the time of cholera between a poor telegrapher and a young schoolgirl who will end up marrying a doctor later on', 12). These questions allude to the plots (or paraphrase the titles) of a wide range of texts including Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952), and Gabriel García Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985); Roger's other questions also reference Luis Sepúlveda's *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories* (1989), Yukio Mishima's *The Music* (1964), Ernesto Sábato's *The Tunnel* (1988), and Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* (1959). Examining the list, one notes that there are no 'French' (or even 'francophone') authors; the only other African voice of the group—the Nigerian Amos Tutuola—is anglophone.

Roger's inclination to racialize 'real' writers as white, and to classify works of minority authors writing in French alongside other 'foreign' writers, recalls the claims of ghettoization which the signatories (including Mabanckou himself) of the manifesto 'Pour une littérature-monde en français' leveled against the taxonomy *francophonie*. Published in *Le Monde* in 2007, what came to be known as the 'manifeste des quarante-quatre' (the manifesto of the forty-four) decried how the mutually exclusive categories 'francophone' and 'French', used to classify works in physical and online bookstores (such as the major French retailer FNAC), depended largely on racial identity and ghettoized those works classified as 'francophone'.¹⁴ At the time, perusing bookstores confirmed these claims: works by Aimé Césaire, a black Martinican, and therefore French, author were classified as 'francophone', and not French, while those of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a white philosopher born in Switzerland, not France, could be found in the 'French' section.¹⁵ Roger's assumptions about Fessologue's book, in fact, perfectly capture the problems emerging from classifying 'francophone' works alongside 'foreign' ones translated into French, to which Mabanckou himself responded in the edited volume based on the manifesto: 'these authors of "foreign literature" do not share the French language with me'.¹⁶ Through Roger's notions about Fessologue's authorship, then, *Black Bazar* exposes the larger reading strategies to which minority authors and their works are subjected.

Similarly, the tirades of Mr. Hippocratic (Fessologue's Martinican neighbor) about francophone authorship in general reveal that these

taxonomies and reading lenses legitimize certain roles for francophone authors—notably that of grateful recipient. Though Mr. Hippocratic personally finds it dehumanizing to be positioned as ‘black’ and affirms his own desire to no longer be ‘taxé de noir’ (226) (‘referred to as being black’, 224), he nevertheless imposes a racializing gaze on others to affirm his distinction from other ‘black’ populations, as Éloïse Brezault has pointed out.¹⁷ This racializing gaze is also evident in how Mr. Hippocratic envisions black authorship: as a colonial gift for which the (formerly) colonized author should be—but often is not—grateful. Mr. Hippocratic even suggests that the earliest francophone works—including Ferdinand Oyono’s *Le Vieux Nègre et la médaille* (1956) (*The Old Man and the Medal*, 1969) and *Une Vie de boy* (1956) (*Houseboy*, 1966), Mongo Beti’s *Ville cruelle* (1954) (*Cruel City*, 2013) and *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* (1956) (*The Poor Christ of Bomba*, 1971), and René Maran’s *Batouala* (1921)—owe their very existence to the colonization they critique. It is ‘grâce à la colonisation’, (‘thanks to colonization’) he asserts, that these works were published and that ‘un Noir a eu pour la première fois le prix Goncourt qui n’est réservé, en principe, qu’aux Blancs’ (228) (‘a black won [for the first time] the Prix Goncourt which is meant to be the reserve of the whites’, 226). The undercurrent of gifting (evident in the repeated phrase ‘thanks to’ and the symbolism of the literary prize) that permeates Mr. Hippocratic’s discussion of black authorship reaffirms the French literary establishment as the legitimizer of authors from former colonies and places the black author in the position of gracious recipient (echoing the comics explored in Chapter 1).

Though comically exaggerated, Mr. Hippocratic’s views nevertheless call to mind discussions about two contemporary authors writing in French: Léonora Miano and Marie NDiaye. Cameroonian Léonora Miano has described how pressure to demonstrate gratitude toward the French publishing industry has curtailed her narrative options:

je suis avant tout une femme du tiers-monde à qui on accorde une faveur, et je suis donc sommée, par divers moyens, de rester à ma place.¹⁸

(I am, above all, a third-world woman for whom they’re doing a favor, and I’m thus ordered, through various means, to stay in my place.)

Similarly, after receiving the Prix Goncourt for her novel *Trois Femmes puissantes* (2009) (*Three Strong Women*, 2012), Marie NDiaye drew public criticism from politicians—notably Éric Raoult (UMP Mayor of Raincy)—for denouncing President Nicolas Sarkozy’s policies. Ignoring that NDiaye, though ‘black’, is not only French, but actively resists the

title of ‘francophone’ writer, Raoult’s statement closely resembles that of Mr. Hippocratic in its vocabulary of gifting: ‘We awarded her the Goncourt Prize because she has talent [...]. Now that she has received this prize, she can think as she likes, but as it happens she now has to be a kind of ambassador for our culture [...] France has given her the Goncourt Prize’.¹⁹ As Dominic Thomas has highlighted, from within the phrases ‘we awarded her’ and ‘France has given her’ emerge latent assumptions about the place of minority authors in France: though NDiaye is French, her blackness nevertheless marks her as the internal other.²⁰ In other words, Mr. Hippocratic’s colonial conception of black authorship is alive and well.

Furthermore, in citing what could be termed ‘engaged’ or ‘oppositional’ francophone literature, Mr. Hippocratic not only relegates the black francophone author to the role of spokesperson for his or her community, he also places francophone literary production in a reactionary paradigm with respect to metropolitan literature and culture. Such a vision of African authorship has long pervaded the field of francophone and postcolonial literary criticism; one thinks, for instance, of how the edited volume *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) erects a dialectic within which postcolonial literary production can only ever be reactionary.²¹ Though critics have largely moved away from such binaries pitting so-called ‘minor’ literatures against ‘major’ ones—Françoise Lionnet and Shuh-mei Shih’s formulation of ‘minor transnationalism’ stands out as one exemplary model—iterations of them still nevertheless seep into the literary marketplace’s structural dynamics (through, for instance, the opposition between ‘French’ and ‘francophone’ literature, which I discuss below).²²

While not overtly about francophone authorship, the views of another of *Black Bazar*’s character known as ‘Yves the just Ivorian’ about how racial and ethnic minorities should act in the interpersonal and sociopolitical spheres—that they should be engaged, authentic spokespeople for the racial collectivities in which they are positioned (regardless of whether they identify themselves in that way), and that failure to do so constitutes ‘selling out’—echo similar discussions within cultural criticism. On their surface, Yves’s views on racial identity in France seem not only diametrically opposed to those of Mr. Hippocratic, but also limited to the interpersonal and sociopolitical spheres (rather than commenting on cultural marketplaces). Whereas Mr. Hippocratic actively denies the pertinence of racial identities in his own life, Yves

insists that all black individuals have a collective responsibility to act on behalf of a larger black community in France. Yves proposes, for instance, that black men must sleep with white women to combat monoethnic and monocultural (and implicitly monochrome) notions of French identity. He proclaims, ‘nous allons carrément bâtardiser la Gaule par tous les moyens nécessaires’ (102–03) (‘we’ll go ahead and bastardize Gaul by all means necessary’, 98). Yet closer analysis of Yves’s perspective reveals that it shares more common ground with Mr. Hippocratic’s than initially meets the eye. Like Mr. Hippocratic’s vision of black authorship, Yves’s proposed vengeance strategy both assumes the existence of legitimized ways of performing blackness and obligates individuals externally positioned as ‘black’ to conform to them.

Yet Yves’s views clearly work through some of the most polemic discussions in francophone criticism: African authors’ engagement, authenticity, and selloutism. Yves’s supposition that all black individuals (regardless of whether they identify themselves thus) must actively advocate for a collective black cause parallels wider stances articulated in the field of francophone literary criticism that African authors must write on behalf of the communities they purportedly represent. As Odile Cazenave and Patricia Célérier have posited, such expectations to produce sociopolitically engaged works effectively constitute a ‘burden of commitment’ placed on African authors.²³ Cameroonian author Mongo Beti’s public criticism of his compatriot Calixthe Beyala for refusing to use her literature to shed light on Cameroonian sociopolitical realities, epitomizes such a burden.²⁴ Just as Yves proposes that other protagonists’ racial identity should dictate their behavior, so too do wider literary and cultural critiques fall back on racial or national identities to define narrative possibilities open to francophone authors.²⁵

In fact, the novel pursues these entangled notions of engagement and authenticity through Yves’s accusations that other characters who fail to perform their blackness in ways he considers legitimate are ‘sellouts’—a term often ascribed in the cultural realm to authors and artists who have supposedly abandoned their community (defined in a myriad ways) in pursuit of economic prosperity. From within this critique emerges a judgment about the works themselves: they are no longer ‘authentic’, but rather mass-produced, commercialized objects designed to appeal to the broadest audience possible. In *Black Bazar*, Yves calls ‘Roger the French-Ivorian’ (who, as his name implies, is of mixed national and racial heritage) ‘un vendu comme tous les autres métis’ (104) (‘he has sold out like all the other half-castes’, 100), claiming that he, like artist

sellouts, has abandoned his 'authentic' identity to appeal to the broadest possible market.

Yves's critique of Roger as a 'sellout' here recalls the 'burden of commitment' placed on African authors, demanding that they act on behalf of a larger cause. Moreover, Yves's wish for Roger to 'be Ivorian' (105) all the time presupposes both the existence of an authentic Ivorian identity, and sanctioned ways for Ivorians to demonstrate it. When extended to the literary realm, this logic has two dangerous implications: not only does it forestall African or francophone authors' creative agency by suggesting that certain topics are more (or less) valid for their writing but, more worrisome still, it also primes the audience to read their works through ethnographic and autobiographical, rather than literary, lenses.

Yves's accusation of racial selloutism leveled against Roger also raises the larger topic of audience, calling to mind a perennial question posed of francophone authors (especially given that many successful authors both live and publish in the former *métropole*): for whom should they write? For critics such as Beti and Boubacar Boris Diop, francophone African authors living abroad risk becoming bound up in cultural markets designed to exoticize African cultures and thus reinforcing stereotypes about Africa in the West. This very claim has been leveled against Mabanckou.²⁶ As but one example, one need only consider the case of Camara Laye's *L'Enfant noir* (1953), whose purportedly idyllic tone, nostalgia for colonial Africa, and detailed depiction of certain secret Mande practices (specifically the initiation ceremony) drew scathing criticism and accusations that Laye served as a native informant who had sold out African secrets to a Western audience.²⁷

Through the way its characters read racial minorities, *Black Bazar* examines both the assumptions underpinning debates in cultural criticism and the reading strategies they engender. As I mentioned at this chapter's outset, Fessologue, sometime target of these accusations, curiously resists responding to other characters; rather, he gives his reader an objective map of the francophone critical terrain without intervening himself. This objectivity, however, is merely an illusion. While outwardly Fessologue is a simple recorder of others' debates, a look beneath the surface reveals that he actually participates in them through two types of writing: on the body (fashion *sape*) and on the page (literary *sape*). The force of both types of writing stems from their attention to—and, consequently, their ability to subvert from within—the reading strategies to which they will be subjected.

Fessologue's Fashion *Sape*: Encoding to Undermine Decoding

That *sape* features prominently in Mabanckou's *Black Bazar* is hardly a surprise to readers familiar with his other works. In fact, one could argue that this cultural phenomenon has never *not* been associated with Mabanckou's literary persona. Not only did it serve as the main focus of his first novel, *Bleu-Blanc-Rouge* (1998), largely responsible for propelling him onto the literary scene, but it has also been a mainstay of his subsequent works, both fiction—including his 2012 crime novel *Tais-toi et meurs* (*Shut Up and Die*), his 2013 short story 'Confessions of a *sapeur*' published in *Francophone Afropean Literatures*, and his 2005 novel *Verre cassé* (*Broken Glass*, 2009)—and non-fiction—including his book-length essays *Le Sanglot de l'homme noir* (*The Black Man's Sob*), *Écrivain et oiseau migrateur* (*Writer and Migratory Bird*), and his preface to Héctor Mediavilla's *S.A.P.E.* As one might expect, then, *sape* has featured prominently in critical discussions of Mabanckou's works, particularly those focusing on *Bleu-Blanc-Rouge* and *Black Bazar*.

Like the excellent sociological studies on real-life *sapeurs* on which they draw,²⁸ these critical studies of *sape* in Mabanckou's works focus primarily on revealing the discrepancies between *sapeurs*' real lives and the narratives they put forth through communications with their 'home' communities and through their clothing during *descentes* (return trips). The main questions driving these literary and cultural studies center around the relationship between *sapeurs*' agency and the larger exploitative systems in which they find themselves. For instance, while scholars have concluded that *sape* fashion allows its practitioners to assert their agency within larger systems in which they have relatively little power (both in the Congo and on a global scale),²⁹ they nevertheless ask whether doing so, in some ways, paradoxically reproduces the same colonial mentalities it supposedly subverts because it continues to place the former colonial power (France, in this case) at the center. In fact, this is precisely the force of *migritude* works, according to critics: they reveal that the *miroir aux alouettes*—the image of France as an El Dorado—is nothing but an illusion.³⁰

The same central preoccupations orienting studies on *sape* in real-life and fictional settings—how do *sapeurs* use their clothing to assert their agency and to what extent does doing so nevertheless perpetuate larger systems that continue to exploit them—also define how scholars have approached Fessologue's *sape* in *Black Bazar*. Pascale De Souza, for instance, points out how Fessologue's ties, which prominently feature

the quintessential symbol of the Eiffel Tower, are at once ‘a symbol of success’ and ‘the epitome of the colonial yoke’.³¹ For Fessologue (as for the *sapeurs* before him), adorning his body with authentic European designer labels (*griffes*) and symbols (the Eiffel Tower), simultaneously confirms two opposing narratives. Through them he both asserts his agency but also risks becoming a site of neocolonial conquest.

My reading of Fessologue’s *sape*, however, comes to a slightly different conclusion. In my view, *Black Bazar* uses *sape* as a metacommentary on literal and figurative acts of reading, including those filters applied to *sapeurs* and francophone authors in cultural and literary criticism. In other words, Fessologue’s *sape* in *Black Bazar* raises larger questions of minorities’ agency within exploitative systems precisely to challenge its reader to interrogate the assumptions underpinning these discussions. Why is it, *Black Bazar* asks, that *sapeurs* can only be either subversive agents or unintentional victims of neocolonialism? Likewise, why are similar classificatory schemas (‘engaged’ or ‘sellout’, victim of metropolitan publishing or subversive writer) disproportionately applied to francophone authors and their works? Ultimately, as I now trace by examining two of Fessologue’s *danses des griffes*, the novel uses fashion *sape* to shift its reader’s gaze from Fessologue’s performance itself to the assumptions underpinning how the reader decodes it. In the same way, as I discuss in this chapter’s final section, the novel’s literary *sape* similarly shifts *Black Bazar*’s reader’s attention to the lenses through which s/he understands the novel itself. In so doing, the novel intervenes in the way it is packaged as a case of what Graham Huggan has termed the ‘postcolonial exotic’.³²

Though he references clothing a few times earlier in the novel, the first time Fessologue discusses the cultural phenomenon of *sape*, he contextualizes it within the act of reading. In fact, the chapter begins with Fessologue engaged in the act of reading his own body. Here, he performs the first of two *danses des griffes* in the novel. Observing himself in a mirror, he figuratively decodes his outfits for *Black Bazar*’s reader, playfully and hyperbolically asserting that he wears: ‘Linen jackets by Emmanuel Ungaro that crease elegantly and are worn with refinement. Terylene jackets by Francesco Smalto. One hundred per cent or even two hundred percent lambswool jackets in pure Cerruti 1884 fabric. Jacquard socks’ (38–39). Though one might read Fessologue’s impossible claim that his vests are made of ‘200% lambswool’ as a sign of his devotion to fashion, another clue in this passage—the reference to the Cerruti 1884 fabric—leads me to conclude otherwise. As discussed

in the previous chapter, *sapeurs*' success depended on assembling wardrobes whose constituent parts bear authentic, designer labels; it is thus surprising that Fessologue states on two separate occasions that his clothes are from 'Cerruti 1884', (28, 44), when the authentic couturier is Cerruti 1881. The uninitiated reader will likely miss this detail and take Fessologue's word that he is a good *sapeur*; however, those with the requisite cultural background will likely read this detail as evidence that, in attempting to participate in a market he does not fully understand, Fessologue is duped into adorning his body with counterfeit goods.

What, then, should we make of Fessologue as a *sapeur*? Is he, as his 200% lambswool vests suggest, the epitome of *sape*? Is he, as his off-brand garments and their sometimes kitschy symbols indicate, the victim of larger systems in which he has little power? Or does he, in fact, deliberately deploy these overused symbols and off-brand garments to subvert the system from the inside? *Black Bazar* offers its reader no conclusive answer and, in my view, this is precisely the force of Fessologue's *danse des griffes*. Fessologue's careful attention to his outfits' composition throughout the novel suggests that these seeming mistakes are deliberate, not accidental. Moreover, far from glossing over some of his garments' off-brand labels, Fessologue actively draws his reader's attention to them—something he would not do if he were trying to conceal them. In my view, Fessologue deliberately presents evidence to support both readings in order to bait his readers into drawing definitive conclusions. Far from saying anything about Fessologue as a *sapeur*, the conclusions his readers (and cultural critics) draw expose the preexisting lenses (reading strategies) to which his body is subjected. In a deft move, Fessologue uses *sape* precisely to reveal and subsequently interrogate the prescribed narratives imposed on *sapeurs*' bodies.

This scene thus calls to mind those conclusions drawn by critics regarding francophone authors and their works discussed above. To echo but one example, Fessologue's chameleon-like appearance here recalls the main positions ascribed to Camara Laye's canonical *L'Enfant noir* in the criticism.³³ To put it in terms that parallel Fessologue's *danse des griffes*: is Laye an unwitting victim of the French publishing industry? Does his use of a seemingly nostalgic tone indicate that he has internalized colonial views of Africa? Or does he deploy seemingly 'authentic' symbols of Africa (those that conform to his European audience's preexisting image of the continent) in order to slyly subvert the system from the inside?³⁴

Fessologue's *danse des griffes* suggests that definitively resolving this

debate is not only impossible but counterproductive because any attempt to do so, *Black Bazar* claims, necessarily weighs Laye against implicit standards for African authors without interrogating the assumptions upon which these standards rest. Fessologue reads his own body not to show off his clothing, but rather to expose and interrogate the very reading strategies he knows his readers will use to decode it. To draw a definitive conclusion either way—that Fessologue is an authentic *sapeur* or a victim of larger systems in which he has no control—is to fall prey to the very trap he sets through his clothing. Rather, what becomes the focus in this scene are the problematic assumptions underpinning his audience's reading strategies themselves—a proxy for the reading strategies (such as notions of 'engagement', 'selloutism', or 'authenticity') permeating literary and cultural criticism as well.

Immediately following this scene, Fessologue performs a second *danse des griffes* that illustrates what happens when audiences read others' bodies without the cultural background necessary to do so. Because he carefully prepares his body to be read, Fessologue literally and figuratively goes out of his way to draw others' gazes to his display on the way to a friend's party: 'j'aurais pu prendre un taxi, mais pourquoi me priver des regards des passants?' (47) ('I could have caught a cab, but why miss out on the looks of passers-by?', 43). When he arrives at Paris's Gare du Nord, he notices that his plan to draw attention to himself has succeeded, and consequently he performs a *danse des griffes* for his spectators: 'J'ai ouvert les trois boutons de la veste, une technique pour mettre en valeur ma ceinture Christian Dior' (48) ('I undid three of my jacket buttons, which is a special technique I have for showing off my Christian Dior belt to its best advantage', 44). Through this choreographed movement Fessologue reveals his outfit's shocking force: even his concealed accessories bear authentic labels.

His audience, however, responds not with awe and applause but with insults: 'Ah oui, il faut tous les virer, ces connards!' (49) ('Too right, let's get rid of the bastards!', 45) and 'Bande de fainéants!' (49) ('Slackers, the lot of them!', 45). Confused and alarmed, Fessologue silently waits on the platform for his train; only later does he realize that his suit was the same color green as the uniforms of the striking SNCF agents (50). For Fessologue, being mistaken for a striking laborer constitutes the ultimate trauma: 'C'était une humiliation, je n'en suis toujours pas revenu' (45) ('I felt so humiliated, I still haven't got over it', 40).

Though it might at first seem like Fessologue overreacts, closer analysis reveals that the stakes could not be higher in this scene: he

and his audience are negotiating for control over how to read his body. Despite Fessologue's best efforts to guide his audience through the act of reading his outfit, they can only draw from their own interpretive grid—one in which the black body is a source of labor. Moreover, while the onlookers at the train station will never understand their error, the novel makes this misreading a focal point for its own reader. In so doing, it exposes the latent assumptions influencing how Fessologue's audience understands his performance. Whereas Fessologue the *sapeur* cannot draw the station's onlookers' attention to this error or, by extension, contest it, *Black Bazar* does both.

This scene also draws its reader's attention to *Black Bazar*'s larger commentary on the relationship between reading, writing, and *sape*—both in literal and figurative terms. Above, I have illustrated how Fessologue uses *sape as a kind of writing* to expose the logic of 'authenticity' to which his body will be put—themselves proxies for the way francophone authors and their works are read in larger critical realms. Below, I will trace how Fessologue uses *writing as a kind of sape* for similar purposes. Just as Fessologue the *fashion sapeur* uses recognizable fashion labels (*griffes*) to put himself forth as a chameleon, Fessologue the *literary sapeur* uses both conspicuous and carefully hidden references to other cultural works (literary *griffes*) to the same end. Ultimately, the Gare du Nord episode becomes a cautionary tale warning *Black Bazar*'s readers to avoid making the same mistake with reading the novel itself and its literary *danse des griffes*. Those who miss it—like the station's onlookers—risk returning the black author (and his or her works) to dominant (literary) frameworks. In a deft move, the novel pre-emptively anticipates and interrogates the lenses (and packaging strategies)—iterations of institutionalized spectacularism in the cultural marketplace—applied to francophone works.

Black Bazar's Literary Sape: Writing to Contest Reading

More than any of Fessologue's actions, his choice to abandon *sape* proves scandalous for his friends, who read this act as a sign that he has sold out and abandoned his core values. What his friends take as a radical break in Fessologue's character, however, I read as a continuity that bridges the gap between *sape as a kind of writing* and *writing as a kind of sape*. In other words, Fessologue does not so much abandon *sape* as he chooses to express it through fiction rather than fashion.

As I have been tracing, *sape*-as-writing goes hand in hand with reading, and writing-as-*sape* is no different. For instance, Fessologue describes how his earliest writings—love letters to Congolese women—dutifully reproduced legitimized forms he and his friends found in a French book entitled *Le Parfait Secrétaire* (*The Perfect Secretary*). He humorously recalls:

Et nous on envoyait nos lettres sans même tropicaliser les choses. [...] On évoquait l'hiver, on décrivait la neige, on alignait des sapins à chaque paragraphe. [...] On avait fini par croire que rien n'était plus poétique que d'appeler une fille très noire 'Ma Blonde de neige'. (63)

(And we sent our letters without even tropicalizing them. [...] We wrote about winter, we described the snow, we stuck pine trees into every paragraph. [...] We ended up thinking that nothing could be more poetic than to call a particularly black girl 'My Snowy White', 58–59)

For these young Congolese men, writing—particularly the supposedly intimate, 'authentic' love letter genre—becomes a deliberate act of encoding their narratives to conform to the reader's expectations. Writing, then, ultimately collapses all notions of authenticity, revealing the flawed assumptions upon which rest Diop's and Beti's assertions, discussed above, that African authors have a duty to explore 'authentic' African realities for African audiences in their literature.

Curiously, however, even as *Black Bazar* points out the problematic assumptions perpetuated by the reading strategies of the francophone cultural marketplace (namely, that francophone authors must 'write to right' and that there exist certain legitimized 'authentic' African narratives), the novel actively invites its reader to adopt the very same autobiographical and ethnographic reading strategies it marks as problematic. First, Fessologue claims to be the son of Mabanckou's own mother: '[J]'étais son petit-fils, le fils de sa fille Pauline Kengué' (101) ('I was her grandson, the son of her daughter Pauline Kengué', 96), lending an autobiographical dimension to the novel. Readers of Mabanckou will recognize this autobiographical connection, not only from the many works he has dedicated to her (including *Black Bazar* itself), but also from his 2013 autobiographical novel, *Lumières de Pointe-Noire* (*The Lights of Pointe-Noire*, 2015), in which Mabanckou chronicles his mother's central role in his upbringing. What is more, Fessologue's authorial process—writing a novel based on the journals in which he records his interactions at Jip's, the AfroCuban bar where the majority of the novel is set—also positions him as a 'native informant' charged

with translating his own culture for a foreign audience. Here, one again hears echoes of Laye's novel *L'Enfant noir*, often read through autobiographical and ethnographic lenses. In a cunning move, *Black Bazar* outwardly presents itself as both autobiographical and ethnographic precisely to foreground the larger ideological questions these reading strategies raise.

As I hinted in this chapter's introduction, *Black Bazar* intervenes in these larger ideological discussions using a technique I term literary *sape*—a formal literary device that reflects on the act of reading itself. Just as Fessologue's *danses des griffes* challenge the reader to recognize and interrogate his or her own lacunae and preconceptions, so too do the novel's *danses des griffes littéraires*—allusions to cultural works and political debates from a variety of historical and geographical contexts—draw *Black Bazar*'s readers' attention to the lenses through which they read *Black Bazar* itself. Analyzing the novel's literary *sape*, then, reveals how Fessologue actually participates in those same debates about blackness and black authorship he seems to observe objectively.

Black Bazar's literary *griffes* take a variety of forms. Some are conspicuous, referencing either a work's title or an author by name (such as the film *Jaws*, the television series *MacGyver*, or Phil Collins's song 'Another Day in Paradise', Marx's *Das Kapital* [1867] [*Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*], Claude Nourago's 'Armstrong', or Dany Laferrière's novels *Pays sans chapeau* [1996] [*Down among the Dead Men*, 1997] and *Le Goût des jeunes filles* [1992] [*Dining with the Dictator*, 1994]), while others, reduced to convenient sound bites, are only identifiable to those with the cultural background necessary to recognize them. For instance, the *griffes* used in descriptions of Mr. Hippocratic—including two references to the concluding line of Voltaire's *Candide* (Mr. Hippocratic's insistence that everyone must 'cultiver son jardin' [29, 35] ['cultivate his own garden', 23, 29]), a canonical work of French literature, and Fessologue's quip that 'il prétend qu'il y a *des bruits et des odeurs* quand mes amis et moi préparons de la nourriture et écoutons de la musique' (36; emphasis added) ['Not to mention the *noises and smells* he claims get produced by me and my friends when we're cooking our food and listening to our music', 30], an allusion to the now infamous speech Jacques Chirac gave during an RPR dinner debate on June 19, 1991—lend weight to Mr. Hippocratic's insistence that he does not want to be positioned as black, and align him with both conservative, right-wing rhetoric and notions French cultural purity.

The sheer quantity and variety of these references collapse all interpretive categories such as ‘popular’ and ‘canonical’, or ‘African’ and ‘French’, lending weight to De Souza’s conclusion that it is unlikely that one reader will recognize them all.³⁵ Where I differ from her interpretation, however, is with respect to the larger implications of the novel’s literary *sape*. While she concludes that the fact that the reader will never recognize all of these references reveals his or her own shortcomings to him or her, I would add that it is through this strategy that the novel demands that its reader critically examine the potential implications of these shortcomings. In other words, the novel’s literary *sape* not only prompts its reader to ask ‘What other references am I missing?’ but, more importantly, ‘What assumptions is the act of missing these references causing me to make?’

Returning to the train station scene discussed above clarifies this nuanced distinction. As I suggested above, Fessologue’s audience fails to grasp the significance of his belt’s designer label (Christian Dior) during his *danse des griffes*, just as readers will likely miss many of the novel’s literary *griffes*. Yet what becomes the focal point of this scene is not just the audience’s incomprehension (though this is, of course, an important element), but also the misreading that results from it. They read his body as a striking laborer, the ‘ultimate humiliation’ for an enthusiastic *sapeur* like Fessologue. In the same way, *Black Bazar*’s literary *sape* uses its *danse des griffes* to shift the audience’s gaze from their shortcomings to the problematic readings such shortcomings cause them to make.

Three examples of the novel’s literary *sape* reveal how *Black Bazar* in fact participates in those discussions about francophone writers that Fessologue seems to simply record. In the conversation between Roger and Fessologue about African authorship discussed above, for instance, a literary *danse des griffes* highlights the assumptions behind uncritically received European images of Africa. Roger comically apes the civilizing mission’s rhetoric, extolling the French imperial project: ‘Y avait tous ces maux sur nos terres d’*ébène*, notre *Afrique fantôme* au point que même *Tintin* était contraint de faire le déplacement en personne pour notre bien!’ (16; emphasis added) (‘There were all these ills over our *ebony lands*, our *ghostly Africa*, to the point that even *Tintin* ended up having to come over in person on our behalf’, 10). This account of African history contains unsignaled references to Michel Leiris’s autobiographical and ethnographic book *L’Afrique fantôme* (*Phantom Africa*, 1934), written during his participation in the Mission Dakar-Djibouti; Hergé’s comic *Tintin au Congo* (1931)

(*Tintin in the Congo*, 2012); and Albert Londres's *Terre d'ébène* (*Ebony Land*, 1929), a travel narrative that denounces the effects of colonial rule. The content of both Leiris's and Londres's texts works at cross purposes with Roger's stereotypical image of Africa as an uncivilized land: *Terre d'ébène* depicts colonization—not precolonial Africa—as 'savage', and *L'Afrique fantôme* reveals more about the ideologies and epistemologies central to the burgeoning scientific disciplines that took Africa as their object of inquiry than it does about Africa itself. Reading this passage as an example of a literary *danse des griffes* reveals its subversive commentary on Roger's stereotypes about Africa. By inconspicuously citing works that directly counter the content of Roger's speech, Fessologue the literary *sapeur* advances a critique resembling that offered by Achille Mbembe: that 'narrative about Africa is always pretext for a comment about something else, some other place, some other people. More precisely, Africa is the mediation that enables the West to accede to its own subconscious and give a public account of its subjectivity'.³⁶

Another prominent example of literary *sape* comes during Fessologue's interactions with the protagonist known as 'l'Arabe du coin' ('The Arab on the Corner') who on five separate occasions asks Fessologue if he knows of the 'poète noir' ('black poet') who wrote the lines 'L'Occident nous a trop longtemps gavés de mensonges et gonflés de pestilences' (24, 112, 114, 147, 246) ('For too long the West has force-fed us with lies and bloated us with pestilence', 18, 109, 110, 144, 244). Just like the novel's other semi-concealed references, this interrogative format, which censors both the author's name and the work's title, encourages the uncertain reader to pursue the reference—one which readers unfamiliar with Aimé Césaire can uncover with minimal research. Without deeper knowledge of francophone literary criticism, however, such a reader will likely miss the way in which this instance of literary *sape* reflects on processes of packaging black authors in literary marketplaces. Specifically, in referring to Césaire, the Arab on the Corner adopts part of the now famous phrase André Breton used to title his preface to Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (*Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*): 'Un grand poète noir' ('A great black poet'). For critics, this preface raises some of the most central questions regarding black authorship and packaging, including why Breton's voice was needed to preface the work, what relationship this preface establishes with respect to the work itself, and what role, specifically, Breton envisions race playing in Césaire's authorship.³⁷ That the Arab on the Corner refers to Césaire as a 'grand

poète noir', rather than using his name, draws the reader's attention to the larger frameworks to which francophone authors are subjected, as well as their ideological implications.

One final example of literary *sape* illustrates how *Black Bazar's* form intervenes in its own protagonists' discussions of 'passing' and 'selling out' highlighted above. After Fessologue abandons vestimentary *sape* and begins straightening his hair, a Gabonese man approaches him and criticizes his physical appearance: 'Le Gabonais a rajouté que je n'étais qu'un pauvre Noir qui n'aimait pas le manioc et que je me défrisais les cheveux pour ressembler aux Blancs' (245; emphasis added) ('The Gabonese man added that I was just a poor *Black who didn't like cassava* and that I straightened my hair to look like Whites', 243). This interaction harkens back to both Yves's expectations that black and mixed-race individuals perform their racial identity in certain prescribed ways. This passage, too, contains an unsignaled allusion to Gaston Kelman's novel *Je suis noir et je n'aime pas le manioc* (*I'm Black and I Don't Like Cassava*, 2003)—that readers unfamiliar with contemporary francophone literature are likely to miss. Referencing a work that has been termed a 'non-threatening, apologist narrative'³⁸—draws attention to how these accusations of racial shame are remapped onto literary landscapes. Fessologue, now an author, discovers that his individual, corporeal choices are taken as representative of a community much in the same way that individual francophone authors are often burdened with expectations that they serve as spokespeople for their communities.

Ultimately, then, the novel's *literary sape* subverts the main problematic reading strategies (cultural institutionalized spectacularism) underpinning the cultural marketplace. First, the diversity of its *griffes* contests the notion that there are sets of cultural references shared by those of the same national or racial background, thereby highlighting the problematic assumptions that cultural critics perpetuate when they demand that authors use their writing to explore certain sacrosanct subjects. What is more, these references are often reduced to easily digestible and deployable sound bites. This act, then, suggests that all cultural works—not just African ones—are subject to processes of commodification in cultural marketplaces. That these claims of inauthenticity and selloutism are disproportionately applied to francophone (or minority, in a broader sense) authors and their works in the literary marketplace reveals the problematic assumptions disproportionately applied to francophone—and not French or majority—authors.

Conclusions

This *mise-en-abyme* of contesting interpretation through literary *sape* is not limited to the novel *Black Bazar*. Since its publication, *Black Bazar* has been translated into theatrical and musical forms: Modeste Nzapassara's one-man play performed in 2011 and two *soukous* albums entitled *Black Bazar* (2012) and *Black Bazar, round 2* (2013).³⁹ The title track of *Black Bazar*, 'Black Bazar: Face A' ('Black Bazaar: A-Side'), which sets Congolese artist Soulemayne Diamanka's slam poetry to *soukous* music, illustrates how the project's musical iteration extends the novel's broad reflection on contemporary images of blackness into the musical realm. In the song's second verse, Diamanka's lyrics meditate upon common phrases containing the word 'black': 'Justice blanche, misère noire / La bête noire, c'est toi / C'est écrit noir sur blanc / Et ta peau restera noire malgré ton masque blanc' (White justice, black misery / The black sheep is you / It's written black on white / And your skin will remain black despite your white mask).⁴⁰ The anaphora of 'black' (in both French and English) underscores how images of blackness in everyday parlance are heavily steeped in notions of violence, exclusion, marginalization, and struggle. The song's lyrics even engage in literary *sape*, referencing Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*—a work which contests how skin color becomes a lens through which the actions and accomplishments of all individuals positioned as 'black' are filtered.⁴¹

Black Bazar is hardly the first novel in which Mabanckou has deployed the literary form that I have termed '*literary sape*', which could be considered a formal thread running throughout his oeuvre. As John Walsh has illustrated, Mabanckou had already used this form in his earlier novel *Verre cassé* (2005) to call into question processes of canon formation and to explode taxonomies such as *francophonie* from within.⁴²

As I have traced throughout this chapter, Mabanckou's novel proposes reading (figuratively and literally) as a potentially dehumanizing act—an echo of the type of gaze the colonial children's comics discussed in Chapter 1 cultivate in their young reader. Mabanckou's novel not only draws parallels between the many arenas in which this gaze operates (sociopolitical, historical, and cultural) and shows how, far from limited to interracial interactions, these gazes also inform how racial and ethnic minorities read each other's bodies (and works), but it also makes the gaze itself the object of critical scrutiny. At the same time, *Black Bazar*

mitigates the potential violence of the gaze by endlessly refracting its objects through its intermedial form. In so doing, the novel considers the assumptions underpinning reading and marketing strategies—including the ‘write to right’ narratives—through which francophone works are marketed and consumed.

On its surface, the work I consider in the next chapter, *Blues pour Élise*, seems to return to the ‘write to right’ paradigm. In fact, the novel’s back cover announces that *Blues*’s protagonists depart from the ‘clichés misérabilistes’ (clichés of misery) the reader has come to associate with minority literature in contemporary France (such as those discussed in Chapter 2): they live bourgeois lifestyles, eat sprouted grains, use Paris’s Vélib’ bike share system, and participate in speed dating. *Blues*, like *Black Bazar*, contests latent notions of France’s racial and ethnic minority populations’ homogeneity, and takes as its focus a new community termed ‘Afropeans’: those born in France to parents of sub-Saharan African immigrant background. Yet *Blues*’s main focus is not simply correcting latent stereotypes about what one might call ‘black France’ by giving its reader a more nuanced vision of its heterogeneity. Rather, it also takes as its focus the origins of these stereotypes themselves: images of blackness (and whiteness) that permeate mainstream media. In fact, as I show, *Blues*’s form is intermedial—the novel bears traces of both a music album and a television series. Through this intermediality the novel constructs an Afropean mediascape that not only offers an alternative to the mainstream media, but also allows the novel, like *Black Bazar*’s literary *sape*, to take a self-reflexive stance on its own status as a cultural object subjected to the cultural marketplace’s larger forces.

CHAPTER FOUR

Looking Back on Afropea's Origins

Léonora Miano's *Blues pour Élise* as an Afropean Mediascape

As I show throughout this book, the gaze is associated with power and privilege. Not only do those in power never have to question the existence of their gaze, they also control how they and other populations are put on display. The works studied in the previous two chapters have staked out their own 'oppositional gaze', both looking back at their audience and contesting the image through which they are depicted. The works self-reflexively grapple with how they might become complicit in perpetuating the same institutionalized spectacularism they seek to contest (the way racial and ethnic minorities are discussed in news media, or marketed in cultural marketplaces).

Scholars who have approached the gaze through postcolonial and racial lenses have underscored how media transmit a privileged white, male, heteronormative gaze. bell hooks says it best:

When most black people in the United States first had the opportunity to look at film and television, they did so fully aware that mass media was a system of knowledge and of power reproducing and maintaining white supremacy. To stare at the television, or mainstream movies, to engage its images, was to engage its negation of black representation.¹

Other scholars, notably Frantz Fanon and Stuart Hall, have similarly echoed how media landscapes often betray a white gaze, which is subsequently internalized by minority populations.² In fact, one of the unearned privileges that white people enjoy, according to Peggy McIntosh, is being able to 'turn on the television or open the front page of the newspaper and see people of [one's] race widely represented'.³ Efforts to 'look back' thus demand not only an interrogation of what is

seen but also of the larger institutional forces that privilege certain ways of looking.

Léonora Miano's 2010 novel *Blues pour Élise* does just that: it probes the relationship between minorities' literal (in)visibility within predominantly whitewashed mediascapes (a term Arjun Appadurai defines as 'image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality')⁴ and their figurative recognition. Far from simply pointing out how the relative absence of racial and ethnic minorities within France's mediascape impacts its Afropean characters, however, the novel puts itself forth as its own Afropean mediascape—its own remedy to the normative, whitewashed mediascape. In her collection of essays, *Habiter la Frontière* (2012) (*Inhabiting the Border*), Miano has decried how black populations still struggle for control of their image in France, and how minorities often have little control over these ways of looking:

Être Noir en France aujourd'hui, c'est avant tout être dans une situation d'impouvoir. *C'est ne pas maîtriser sa propre image*, puisqu'elle est fabriquée par d'autres, qui conçoivent eux-mêmes, l'objet de leur crainte, de leur détestation, de leur mépris, ou d'une empathie infantilisante. C'est même voir son image détournée.⁵

(To be black in France today is above all to be disenfranchised. *It's to be unable to control your own image*, because it's produced by others, conceived as the object of their fear, their loathing, their contempt, or of an infantilizing empathy. It's even to see one's image hijacked.)⁶

Miano points to the example of Saffy Nebbou's film *L'Autre Dumas* (*The Other Dumas*, 2010), whose casting of Gérard Dépardieu as Alexandre Dumas expunged the author's complex racial heritage.⁷ For Miano, this specific example of racial whitewashing in Nebbou's historically based fictional film is both symptomatic of and also participates in a larger, more sinister whitewashing: that of French national history and memory. She puts it bluntly:

Parce que Dumas appartient au patrimoine littéraire hexagonal, il ne peut être incarné par un Noir, ce qui est une manière d'indiquer aux Noirs qu'ils ne peuvent représenter leur pays qu'en étant blanchis.

(Because Dumas belongs to the metropolitan French literary heritage, he cannot be played by a black man, which is a way to indicate to blacks that they can only represent their country by being whitened.)⁸

A self-reinforcing cycle ensues: the larger absence of racial and ethnic minorities in mainstream media perpetuates latently racialized (white)

conceptions of national identity, which, in turn, continue to influence the types of image presented in the media.

Miano's 2010 novel *Blues pour Élise* examines the risks, stakes, and potential ways of changing (in quantity and type) racial and ethnic minorities' literal and figurative visibility in France and their implications for minorities' recognition. Like the works studied in earlier chapters, *Blues* could be said to 'write to right'; in this case, it 'rights' the association between racial and ethnic minorities and socioeconomic disenfranchisement. The novel counters images of heterogeneity often inscribed onto a 'black French' population by tracing the lives of France's 'Afropeans'. As Nicki Hitchcott and Dominic Thomas point out, the term 'Afropeans' refers to the heterogeneous population of sub-Saharan African descent born in Europe.⁹ More than a shared African history or culture, what unites Afropean individuals is a shared experience of exclusion on European soil.

There are many works I could have chosen to explore the case of France's Afropean populations, including one of Miano's other novels, *Tels des Astres Éteints* (*Like Extinguished Stars*, 2008), or novels by Wilfried N'Sondé, Bessor, Sami Tchak, or Fatou Diome.¹⁰ Yet what sets Miano's *Blues* apart from the others, and the reason why I have chosen to focus almost exclusively on it in this chapter, is the way that, more than any other work I could have chosen, it engages this book's central threads—the gaze and display—through both its content and its self-reflexive form. A quest for acceptance drives each of its Afropean characters, whose individual struggles mirror Afropeans' collective ones. Their cases raise larger questions regarding visibility, including: What is the relationship between external and internal recognition? Is gaining recognition an active or passive process? And what is the relationship between racial and ethnic minorities' literal visibility (such as within France's media) and their metaphorical visibility within historical discourse? Studying *Blues*, in other words, allows me to supplement the discussions I've opened in previous chapters (how do francophone authors and artists simultaneously 'look back' at their audience and the ways the cultural marketplace packages them?) with an extended study of how mediascapes operate as sites of display.

To illustrate how the novel engages with these questions, while resisting answering them definitively, I turn to two of *Blues's* protagonists: the sisters Estelle and Shale. Estelle operates as the mouthpiece for a more militant Afropean perspective. In her view, Afropeans should actively affirm their presence by 'inventing themselves, imposing

themselves, and speaking themselves' instead of waiting for external recognition ('to be named', as she puts it) in the eyes of the majority (106).¹¹ Her view seems to offer a seductively simple and above all agency-filled response to Miano's observations above: Don't like how, when, or where you're depicted? Change it yourself! Yet her sister Shale's case calls into question the efficacy of such a strategy within a wider context of historical amnesia. From her earliest childhood years, Shale has felt like an outsider in her family. Though she does not know it until the end of the novel, she has good reason for these feelings: born nine months after her mother's rape, her paternity is uncertain (her father, Raymond, who knows of the rape, outwardly claims Shale as his own, but his actions testify to a barrier between them). It is not until Shale's mother Élise finally breaks the silence surrounding her origins that Shale can reconnect with the many communities to which she belongs (Cameroonian, French, and familial). Shale's case, which I read as a metaphor for the wider Afropean struggle for recognition in France thus directly interrogates Estelle's strategy above. Significantly, it is not until Shale 'is named' and her history is finally spoken, that she begins to feel a sense of belonging.

If *Blues*'s content explores how Afropeans' visibility in European media is both symptom and outcome of the larger whitewashing of history and memory, its intermedial form offers a response. The novel's structure bears traces of both a television series and a music album (complete with a 'Bonus' chapter which, like the 'bonus' tracks on musical albums, is not listed in the novel's table of contents).¹² For these reasons, I read *Blues* as a self-contained Afropean mediascape whose significance is twofold. First, it provides an alternative to the whitewashing Miano criticizes above. In constructing its Afropean mediascape, *Blues* looks both transnationally to other diasporic spaces (especially the African American context) and to 'local' French and European contexts. This positions the Afropean mediascape as just one node in a much larger interconnected network of mediascapes. Second, *Blues*'s structure emphasizes cultural works' status as commodities within larger cultural marketplaces and reflects on how cultural recognition and visibility go hand in hand with commodification. Like Alain Mabanckou's *Black Bazar*, examined in Chapter 3, *Blues* uses its form to expose and contest institutionalized spectacularism in cultural marketplaces.

White Screens, White Memories, and *Les Nouveaux Français*

While *Blues* is a literary work, it was originally written as an 'Afropean' television series (traces of which I analyze in this chapter's third section). Though *Blues* has yet to appear on the small screen, this literature-television intermediality nevertheless points its readers' gaze towards French television, encouraging them to critically evaluate the types of programs offered. It puts on display the conspicuous absence of minorities in certain realms of French popular culture, harkening back to hooks's and attendant assessment of global mediascapes' overwhelmingly white gaze. That network executives refused *Blues* airtime is not, perhaps, surprising given the historically limited presence of racial and ethnic minorities on France's small screen and the relative dearth of shows with primarily 'minority' casts.¹³ Moreover, those same larger structures responsible for perpetuating the whiteness of France's screens despite perennial calls for reform of how, when, and in what capacity racial and ethnic minorities are given airtime are precisely what *Blues* ultimately contests. Before turning to the novel, however, I would first like to explore these calls for reform in more detail.

Cameroonian author Calixthe Beyala's group Collectif Égalité (Collective Equality) played a central role in bringing discussions of racial and ethnic diversity on French television to the fore, and prompted the first official inquiry by France's Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA; Higher Audiovisual Council) into the topic in 2000. The report's conclusions were sobering: minorities were underrepresented globally in French television media, particularly in certain realms (recurring series and news journalism), but overrepresented in others (sports and music).¹⁴ In series, their roles were secondary and often stereotypical. In television news, they were rarely journalists; the few who occupied this role often presented on 'foreign', rather than domestic affairs. In order to combat this inequality, the CSA modified French public television stations' operating procedures in 2001:

les deux chaînes publiques, France 2 et France 3 doivent assurer la promotion des différentes cultures composant la société française sans aucune forme de discrimination. France 5 [...] doit veiller aux échanges entre les différentes parties de la population, et à diffuser des émissions relatives à l'insertion des étrangers.¹⁵

(the two public channels, France 2 and France 3, must promote the different cultures that make up French society without any form of

discrimination. France 5 [...] must ensure exchanges between different parts of the population, and broadcast shows about the integration of foreigners.)

Yet, despite this attention to promoting diversity on French airwaves, the history of diversity in terms of race and ethnicity on French television reads like a broken record: a declaration of continued deficiency, calls for further studies, reports suggesting more and different visibility, followed by another declaration of continued deficiency. In 2004, the first report released by France Télévisions after launching its ‘Plan d’action positive pour l’intégration’ (Positive Action Plan for Integration), for instance, concluded that ‘L’image des populations immigrées est déformée’ (The image of immigrant populations is skewed), still largely dominated by sports, music, and stereotypical roles; ‘L’insuffisance est globale’ (every area is falling short), and ‘Les conditions de recrutement des journalistes et des présentateurs ne favorisent pas la présence de personnes issues de l’immigration dans ces métiers’ (The conditions for recruiting journalists and hosts are not favorable toward people of immigrant backgrounds in these careers).¹⁶ Reports issued almost a decade later (2011 and 2013) show little (if any) improvement. As President of the CSA’s ‘Diversity’ task force Mémona Hintermann-Afféjee has highlighted, French television media still hardly reflect the diversity (in terms of racial and ethnic background, age, handicap, and socioeconomic status) of the French population—a manifestation of institutionalized spectacularism.¹⁷

If, for two decades, reports have continued to signal a problem with minority presence and to propose the same solutions, what is preventing concrete progress? The language used in the 2001 decree offers several clues. First, it intimates that the promotion of French cultural diversity (code for racial and ethnic minorities, as I explore in Chapter 5) might lead to ‘discrimination’—a reflection of the larger tensions confronting racial and ethnic minority concerns in France’s colorblind universalist context. In fact, this very opposition (promoting diversity while fighting discrimination) permeated discussions of one of the principal strategies proposed to rectify racial and ethnic minorities’ visibility: implementing ethnic quotas. Nowhere was this tension more clearly articulated than at a one-day conference entitled ‘Écrans pâles? Diversité culturelle et culture commune dans l’audiovisuel’ (‘White Screens? Cultural Diversity and Shared Culture in Audiovisual Media’). Held at the Institut du Monde Arabe (IMA; Institute of the Arab World) in 2004, ‘Écrans pâles’ brought together representatives from the CSA, the Haut Conseil à l’Intégration (HCI; High Council on Integration), France’s

media stations, and individuals working in the film and television industry. Perhaps unsurprisingly, though the CSA's report admits that quotas established in US media had a positive effect on racial and ethnic minorities' presence, both the CSA and all of France's network executives nevertheless argued that such means are discriminatory and that the same results could be achieved without implementing quotas.¹⁸

Though the idea of racial and ethnic quotas remains particularly controversial, France's television media are already keenly attuned to naming and quantifying a variety of different populations in order to ensure equal airtime. During elections, for instance, French television stations must give equal time to each candidate. What is more, the CSA promotes gender equality on its airwaves. In fact, in its 2005 report, the CSA specifically compares improving *parité* (equal rights for women) to furthering equal presence for racial and ethnic minorities. Ultimately, it concludes that to promote *parité* is to promote 'equality', whereas to promote racial and ethnic minorities using quotas is to 'discriminate'.¹⁹ This conclusion, however, depends on the way the CSA incorrectly identifies biological sex (significantly, only 'male' or 'female') as a universality and gender as neatly corresponding to sex: 'on est toujours homme ou femme et la féminité est aussi universelle que la masculinité' (we are always either a man or a woman and femininity is as universal as masculinity).²⁰ Unlike biological sex or gender, 'race', the CSA concludes, is a socially constructed category and cannot therefore be quantified. In a highly problematic move, the same biological determinism often cited in arguments made *against* racial quotas (race is not biological and therefore should not be quantified) becomes the cornerstone of the CSA's argument *for* gender equality. I suspect that in the coming years the CSA (and France more generally) will revisit its policies on *parité* in light of more current understandings of the difference between an individual's biological sex, gender identity, and gender expression (particularly with the rise in awareness of transgender, gender fluid, and genderqueer populations). This case nevertheless illustrates that France does not oppose quotas *per se*, only their selective application in certain domains (race and ethnicity).

Moreover, charging the HCI—a governmental structure housed within the larger Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and Codevelopment until 2012, when both were disbanded—with investigating racial and ethnic minorities' presence on French television pegs racial and ethnic diversity as subjects best approached through the lens of 'integration'. This move testifies to the larger ways in which France's

official policy of avoiding vocabulary of race ultimately conflates ‘race’ with ‘immigration’. Positioning the HCI as the venue for these discussions and inquiries, therefore, perpetuates the equation between racial and ethnic minorities and ‘foreigners’—those who have not fully integrated into France’s national fabric. It is to this image that Afropeans, born in Europe but often approached as ‘foreigners’ in their own land, respond.

Echoes of these main debates regarding racial and ethnic minorities’ presence on French airwaves emerge in *Blues* at an art exhibition where one of the main protagonists, Estelle, meets her new romantic partner, Ernest. The exhibition itself, entitled ‘Les nouveaux Français’ (‘New French People’) passes almost unnoticed—a metaphor for the lack of recognition received by the larger concerns it represents (France’s racial and ethnic minorities) in France. *Blues* characterizes ‘Les nouveaux Français’ as an afterthought (‘La municipalité d’un arrondissement situé au nord de Paris avait improvisé une galerie d’art’ [The local government of an arrondissement situated in the north of Paris had improvised an art gallery]) to which only a bare minimum of resources have been allocated, evident in the food offered the attendees:

Quelqu’un avait acheté un quatre-quarts au supermarché. La couleur jaune des tranches voulait rappeler l’œuf frais, mais elle demeurait piteusement chimique. [...] Des gâteaux secs étaient présentés dans leur emballage. On y lisait l’inscription: *Prix gagnant*. (97)

(Someone had bought a pound cake at the supermarket. The yellow color of its slices was supposed to resemble fresh eggs, but it was woefully synthetic. [...] Some dry cakes were laid out in their packaging, which read *Value Package*.)

In fact, as the novel points out, many of the event’s attendees (‘un public rare, composé de personnes âgées, de badauds’ [an unusual public, comprised of elderly people and gawkers) happen upon it by chance, seeking shelter from an unexpected deluge (98).

In describing the exhibit, the novel points up two levels of silence that shroud discussions of racial and ethnic minorities in France. First, *Blues* suggests that the exhibit’s subject, ‘Les nouveaux Français’, constitutes a void in the larger mainstream media—a lacuna that Estelle’s friend Carmen seeks to fill using her documentary-style photography: ‘Faire plonger les gens dans le réel que le journal télévisé ne faisait que survoler’ (97) (Plunging people into the reality that the TV news never addressed). Though Carmen’s photography catalyzes productive discussions regarding racial and ethnic minorities, both her work and

the event at which it is displayed go unnoticed by national and even local media, a fact on which the novel insists: 'L'absence totale des médias. Pas même l'ombre d'un *journaliste* de site Internet, brandissant une petite caméra afin de recueillir les impressions' (98; emphasis in original) (The mass media were totally absent. There was not even the shadow of a *journalist* from a website, brandishing a small camera to collect statements). In this way, the novel underscores a double layer of silence surrounding issues of race, ethnicity, and national identity in France. Not only are they relatively absent within mainstream media, but their conspicuous absence itself also receives little to no attention.

Conversations at the exhibition illustrate how this double layer of silence both depends on and reinforces the whitewashing of France's history and memory. When Estelle rejoins her friend, the latter is engaged in a conversation with

une vieille dame qui ne comprenait pas l'intitulé de la manifestation. Prétendait-on modifier la France, remanier son identité, faire en sorte, au fond, qu'elle continue à porter le nom de France sans que son contenu s'accorde en quoi que ce soit avec? La vieille dame s'était lancée dans une tirade sur l'importance du passé. (101)

(an old lady who didn't understand the show's title. Were they claiming to modify France, rework its identity, make sure that, at its heart, it would continue to bear France's name while its content no longer resembled it in the slightest? The old woman launched into a tirade on the importance of the past.)

But yet, as Carmen's reaction suggests, the old woman's vision of the past—the cornerstone upon which her conception of national identity and belonging rest—is at best unintentionally partial, and at worst deliberately amnesic.²¹ As she reminds the old lady:

Les *nouveaux Français* étaient, comme tout ce qui existait dans le pays, une production de son histoire. Ils n'étaient pas apparus subitement. S'ils vivaient en marge de la mémoire nationale telle que la concevait la vieille dame, ils ne l'avaient pas choisi. (102)

The *new French* were, as with everything in the country, a product of its history. They did not appear out of the blue. If they were living on the margins of what the old lady considered national memory, it was not by choice.)

Outwardly, the two women's visions of Frenchness could not be more opposed. Whereas the old lady sees France as an unchanging entity

(latently monoethnic and monochrome), Carmen's view contests the very premise on which the old lady's view rests: that there never had been a static identity one could pinpoint as 'French'. Though seemingly opposed, however, both women's perspectives converge around the importance of naming and point out (from opposite ends) the inaccuracy of the event's title. Presenting racial and ethnic minorities as 'new French' sets them in direct opposition to a supposedly homogeneous population of 'old French'. The old lady is right to criticize the type of modification the exhibit's name implies ('Were they trying to modify France'), and is also right to turn to the past. However, as Carmen's response highlights, it is not 'la France' itself that such discussions modify, but rather the narrow visions of history on which they depend. Here, one hears echoes of the works examined in Chapter 2, which similarly contest the way colonial history is often expunged from national narratives, resulting in restrictive notions of national identity in France.

Estelle and Ernest's first conversation, immediately following the exhibition, interrogates the old woman's static vision of history, genealogy, and national identity, instead positing them as dynamic. Seated in a café, their conversation begins when Estelle asks Ernest to identify the background music: Zap Mama's 'Bandy Bandy' (featuring American neo-soul artist Erykah Badu) from their album *Ancestry in Progress*.²² Far from background noise, this song gives literal and metaphorical voice to the Afropean history often relegated to France's margins. Born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo but shortly thereafter evacuated to Belgium, where she was raised, Zap Mama's group leader Marie Daulne embodies the Afropean position. Musically, Daulne promotes her group's style as Afropean; in fact, not only does the very term 'Afropea' originate with the group's second album, *Adventures in Afropea 1*, but she has also described her overall musical enterprise as a 'bridge between Africa and Europe'.²³ The song 'Bandy, Bandy', which sets prominent string parts (both bowed and pizzicato) to a compressed, synthesized drum machine track and sampled bird sounds, is no exception in this regard. The album's title, *Ancestry in Progress*, also responds directly to the old lady's narrow vision of French history. Rather than one stable, unchanging, and untainted lineage, France's ancestry has always been 'in progress'.

Set to this musical backdrop, the ensuing conversation interrogates, while resisting simplification of, Afropeans' 'visibility'—both cultural and historical—within mainstream media. Though both Ernest and Estelle agree that Afropeans lack recognition, they disagree on both

the source of, and potential ways to rectify, this absence. Estelle blames Afropean artists' unwillingness to speak out. Comparing the case with that of African Americans, she notes that:

Contrairement aux Afro-Américains, qui avaient lutté pour se faire respecter chez eux, ils [les Afropeens] rechignaient à s'affirmer Européens. Or, s'ils ne se sentaient pas à leur place en Europe, ils ne pouvaient attendre d'y être traités en autochtones. (105)

(Unlike African Americans, who had fought to earn their respect in their own land, they [Afropeans] objected to asserting themselves as Europeans. Well, if they didn't feel at home in Europe, they could hardly expect to be treated as natives.)

In her view, Afropeans must not wait to for recognition in the eyes of the majority; rather, 'Ils devaient s'inventer, s'imposer, se dire' (106) (They needed to invent themselves, to impose themselves, to speak themselves). Ernest sees things differently: in his view, the European audience's unwillingness to metaphorically listen, rather than the Afropean artists' reluctance to speak out, perpetuates Afropeans' marginalization. What good, he asks, is 'speaking oneself' when your audience is figuratively deaf?

Ernest's view also implicitly pinpoints institutionalized spectacularism within official historical discourse as the source of Europe's deafness. He points out that African-American artists, unlike their Afropean counterparts, enjoy enormous success in France, which indicates that the audience's reluctance to hear is not due to race. Though Ernest does not explicitly make the connection, this preference for African-American artists mirrors the different places African Americans and French colonial subjects have occupied in French history. As numerous studies have demonstrated, many African Americans found French 'colorblind' society a welcome haven from United States racism in the interwar years.²⁴ Consequently, this history of African Americans' presence in France has, in French national mythology, come to symbolize the success of French republican universalism and the inherent racism of the United States in French national memory. (This also explains why post-civil rights United States policies such as taking ethnic statistics and implementing affirmative action continue to be characterized as 'discriminatory' in France, much like the idea of implementing racial and ethnic quotas on French television discussed above.) Yet to herald the superiority of French colorblindness over the color conscious American model by pointing to the case of the African American population is to ignore another

case—that of France’s colonized subjects—that denounces France’s racial utopia as a myth. As Tyler Stovall highlights, at the very same time as France welcomed African Americans with open arms, it was implementing racist policies against its colonized subjects.²⁵ That French audiences prefer African-American cultural works over Afropean ones, then, becomes an extension of a ‘colonial syndrome’—to expand on Anne Donadey’s formulation of ‘Algeria Syndrome’.²⁶ Literally and metaphorically listening to these populations would also mean recognizing the complex histories from which they were born and rewriting the national myths that depend on the silencing of these histories.

Estelle and Ernest’s conversation might seem to fall into the trap of blaming Europeans alone for perpetuating this historical lacuna—a perennial outcry made against revisiting such histories.²⁷ *Blues* as a whole, however, resists such potentially destructive sweeping generalizations. The case of Estelle’s sister Shale (which I read as a metaphor for Afropeans) reveals that not only does *Blues* implicate *both* Europeans *and* Africans in perpetuating the historical silence, but also resists characterizing the silence as deliberate and calculated. Instead, it pinpoints the amnesia’s source as the difficult nature of the histories themselves, rather than a lack of desire to revisit the past. In so doing, *Blues* avoids the principal pitfalls (such as suggesting that Europeans are the only population at fault, and suggesting that the amnesia is deliberate) that can reinforce feelings of guilt and bitterness and ultimately impede engagement in such historical inquiries.²⁸

Looking Back on Shale’s Origin Story

Echoing Zap Mama’s song, Shale’s ancestry is literally ‘in Progress’, and, though she remains completely ignorant of the rape that obscures her ancestry, she nevertheless has always intuitively perceived a distance separating her from her family. Significantly, the rape of which Shale may be born (as well as its silencing) is an intra-family affair, and symbolizes the silenced histories of Africans’ participation in the slave trade and colonization. Ultimately, Shale’s case highlights the importance of revisiting (or figuratively ‘looking back’ on) the transnational histories that represent Afropea’s metaphorical ‘origin story’, while resisting falling victim to the trap of blaming any one population in particular for this historical silence. Rather, it suggests that the first step forward—simply opening these dialogs—can prove cathartic for all involved.

Though both of Shale's parents are from Cameroon, her father Raymond's family opposed his marriage to Élise. When, despite these reservations, Raymond and Élise not only marry but also legitimize their marriage with a child (Shale's older sister Estelle)—an act which 'avait clairement mis le feu aux poudres' (182) (had clearly sparked things off)—the family deals one final blow to the couple, one that complicates even further Shale's genealogy and that permanently distances her from her family members. Raymond returns home one night to find toddler Estelle alone on the couch, and his cousin and wife in the bedroom:

L'homme appliquait une main ferme sur la bouche d'Élise qui pleurait. Son agresseur s'était levé avec le sourire, avait accusé Élise de l'avoir attiré là. [... L]e cousin avait quitté les lieux en chancelant, disant que Raymond méconnaissait les traditions. Rien de ce qu'il pensait posséder n'était à lui. Pas même sa femme. Tout appartenait à la famille. Non seulement il avait le droit de prendre cette femme, mais il ne pouvait accepter que sa parole soit mise en doute. (184)

(The man was holding his hand firmly over Élise's mouth; she was crying. Her aggressor had gotten up with a smile, had accused Élise of having lured him there. [... T]he cousin had left the place staggering, saying that Raymond was refusing to respect traditions. Nothing that he thought he possessed belonged to him. Not even his wife. Everything belonged to the family. Not only did he have the right to take that woman, but he could not accept that his word be questioned.)

Despite her father Raymond's outward claims that Shale is his daughter, this incident permanently shrouds Shale's identity—born nine months thereafter—in a sense of uncertainty. In her parents' eyes, Shale stands as a constant reminder of the trauma their family endured—one, which, too painful to remember, they refuse to acknowledge.

This intra-family violence symbolizes the violence Africans committed against each another during the slave trade and colonization. Attempts to revisit Africans' roles in these histories, particularly in the cultural realm, however, have proved extremely controversial, and have even faced censorship. For instance, Ousmane Sembene's film *Ceddo* (1979), which depicts a West African village's attempts to preserve its traditions in the face of Christianity, Islam, and the slave trade, was immediately censored in Senegal and Yambo Ouologuem's *Le Devoir de violence* (*Bound to Violence*, 1968), which fictionally explores slavery perpetuated by Africans, was the subject of immediate and widespread criticism.²⁹ *Blues's* vision of the amnesia surrounding Afropeans' history

thus complicates ideas that only Europeans are to blame and are the only population that needs to revisit history.

Where Estelle maintains that Afropean populations must ‘invent themselves, impose themselves, and speak themselves’, Shale struggles to speak and to author herself, even from an early age. For instance, their mother Élise remembers that Shale ‘ne parlait d’elle-même qu’en énonçant son propre prénom’ (166) (only spoke about herself by using her own first name) refusing to use the first-person. Though one might argue that, in so doing, Shale literally ‘speaks herself’—since she uses her own given name—at the same time, this act is also evidence that Shale espouses the gaze that would ‘other’ her. She sees herself, as Fanon put it, ‘in the third person’.³⁰ Shale’s use of the third person tempers Estelle’s idealistic suggestion of speaking the self, cautioning that to do so might disguise how this seemingly powerful act instead reproduces one’s position as object of the violent, othering gaze.

In addition to experiencing difficulties speaking herself, the silence that reigns around Shale’s origins also impedes her attempts to author herself into being through autobiographical fiction. As *Blues* explains, Shale’s childhood was marked by an obsession with origins and recurring episodes where she seemed unable to recognize her own family members:

il arrivait parfois que Shale se réveille le matin avec, dans le regard, une lueur d’incompréhension. Elle semblait se demander quel était cet entourage qui se disait sa famille, *comment elle était arrivée parmi eux*. (168–69; emphasis added)

(it sometimes happened that Shale woke up in the morning with a glimmer of incomprehension in her eye. She seemed to ask who was this entourage that claimed to be her family, and *how had she arrived among them*.)

A quest to discover ‘how she arrived among them’ forms the basis for Shale’s autobiographical fiction, *La Vraie Vie de Sambo* (*The True Life of Sambo*), in which Shale’s autobiographical double Sambo wakes up each morning surrounded by a family of whom she has no recollection, but who know her entire history.

To quell Sambo’s anxiety and, more importantly, to prove her belonging, her family members recount stories from her life. Significantly, however, these stories limit themselves to the post-natal period:

Ceux qui vivaient là connaissaient son nom, *se souvenaient du jour de sa naissance* [...]. La mère [...] lui pinçait doucement la joue, lui faisait *le récit de sa naissance*. (144–45; emphasis added)

(Those who lived there knew her name, *remembered the day of her birth* [...]. The mother [...] gently pinched her cheeks, telling her *the story of her birth*.)

That the fictional mother's attempts to explain Sambo's place in the family originate with the day of her birth—and not before—mirrors Afropeans' metaphorical 'origin story'. Specifically, the larger historical amnesia regarding the global forces (such as colonization) governing how Afropeans 'came to be among' their national families continues to reinforce the reigning narratives pinpointing postcolonial immigration as their metaphorical 'birth'. This resistance to return to the larger histories on which this 'birth' was predicated sidesteps Sambo's question. Rather than recounting 'how she arrived among them', Sambo's family takes for granted that she *is* among them, and instead recount what has happened since she joined them.

If *Blues* indicts both Europeans and Africans for perpetuating this amnesia, the conversation during which Élise tells Shale of her rape nevertheless suggests that this amnesia is not deliberate. Rather, it stems from the pain inherent in revisiting such violent histories. In characterizing the impasse as a result of the conversation's difficult nature, *Blues* not only resists blaming Europeans and Africans for this silence—an act which could engender further feelings of guilt and resentment—but also suggests that one of the biggest difficulties lies in the mere act of opening the conversation.

After Raymond's death initiates a five-year silence between Shale and her mother, Élise finally summons the courage to visit Shale to 'répondre à la question que Shale se posait depuis longtemps' (177) (answer the question that Shale had been asking herself for a long time). Élise struggles to broach the difficult subject; silence and small talk about Shale's new living arrangements (especially the fact that she has just taken in her cousin Baptiste temporarily), dominate their conversation, which is worth quoting at length here:

Élise dit sa surprise en croisant Baptiste à l'entrée de la résidence. Shale répondit qu'elle l'hébergeait depuis quelques jours. *Silence*. Élise ne savait pas qu'ils étaient si proches. Shale rétorqua que ce n'était pas le cas, mais qu'il n'avait nulle part où aller. *Silence*. *Ouverture du pot à thé*. Tout de même, n'était-il pas surprenant que Baptiste soit venu ici plutôt que chez Estelle qu'il connaissait mieux? Estelle était en plein déménagement. C'était elle qui avait donné l'adresse à Baptiste. *Silence*. *Dépôt de tasses sur un plateau. Ajout de deux petites cuillères. Pas de sucre. Pas d'édulcorant. Début de l'infusion des feuilles dans la théière*

transparente. Enfin, rien dans cette situation ne lui posait problème, pas le moins du monde, non, non, puisqu'ils étaient majeurs et n'avaient plus de comptes à rendre, mais comment se faisait-il que Baptiste [...] (176; emphasis added)

(Élise said she had been surprised to run into Baptiste at the apartment building's entrance. Shale responded that she had been putting him up for a few days. *Silence*. Élise didn't know that they were that close. Shale retorted that they weren't, but he had nowhere else to go. *Silence*. *The teapot is opened*. All the same, wasn't it surprising that Baptiste would come here instead of going to Estelle, whom he knew better? Estelle was in the middle of moving. She's the one who gave Baptiste the address. *Silence*. *Cups are set down on a tray*. *Two small spoons are added*. *No sugar*. *No sweetener*. *The tea leaves begin to steep in the transparent teapot*. At any rate, nothing about the situation bothered her, not in the least, no, no, because they were adults and didn't have to explain themselves, but how was it that Baptiste [...])

The syntax Miano uses for this conversation—particularly the stage-direction style sentence fragments describing the tea's preparation—is not found elsewhere in the novel. Read as a metaphor for the larger silence surrounding violent histories such as colonization and the slave trade, this scene also suggests that the source of that silence lies not in a lack of *desire* to entertain such discussions (since Élise has gone to great lengths to track down her daughter after such a long estrangement), but rather an inability to imagine how to open them. In this way, *Blues* avoids characterizing the silence as a calculated refusal to 'look back'—a move that would stand to amplify feelings of resentment and guilt, and reinforce deeply entrenched impasses. Instead, the novel paints the impasse as temporary, and one whose solution is simple: an invitation to dialog. Having grown weary of her mother's small talk, Shale bluntly demands: 'Si tu me disais pourquoi tu es là, maman' (176) (Would you just tell me why you're here, mom). Though certainly not tactful or diplomatic, Shale's move to turn the conversation toward its intended topic suggests that Afropeans can, figuratively speaking, take an active role in catalyzing such productive discussions.

Significantly, *Blues* resists representing (either through direct or indirect discourse) both how Élise reveals this history to Shale and how Shale responds in the moment. Though the novel painstakingly describes the minutiae leading up to the conversation, and will later describe Élise's take on the success of the conversation as a whole, it nevertheless offers no details on how the conversation in question

transpires. In so doing, the novel refuses to print a template (even fictional) for such a conversation, leaving open a myriad possible routes it could take.

If the conversation's details remain ambiguous, the novel nevertheless insists on its cathartic potential and the centrality of naming. As one might expect, finally knowing her own origin story comforts Shale and prompts her to re-establish connections with the many communities to which she belongs. In fact, it is during this conversation that Shale announces her plans to visit Cameroon—a country she had never previously desired to visit. As Élise recounts to her boyfriend Frédéric, '[Shale] veut se recueillir sur la tombe de son père' (186) ([Shale] wants to reflect on the tomb of her father). The term 'se recueillir', which connotes private prayer or reflection, also functions in a double sense: Shale's trip to Cameroon will also allow her to figuratively collect herself; that is, to pick up the pieces of her broken genealogy, and to transform them into a coherent whole. Yet Shale is not the only one for whom the conversation proves cathartic. Having finally recognized the trauma she endured, Élise, too, returns home with a renewed sense of self. Though the conversation itself has exhausted her mentally, psychologically, and even physically, she nevertheless looks to the future with optimism.

Finally, this conversation underscores a connection between naming and history. Specifically, Élise explains to Shale that it was her father who named her:

Quand Élise l'avait interrogé à ce propos, il avait seulement répondu: *Pour qu'elle transforme la boue*. [... I]l faisait allusion à l'histoire qui avait engendré la fillette. C'était cela, la boue que l'enfant devait transformer'. (178, emphasis in original)

(When Élise asked him about it, he had only replied: *So that she can transform the mud*. [... H]e was alluding to the history that had produced the young girl. It was that, the mud that the child needed to transform; emphasis in original.)

This piece of information not only constitutes the missing link between Shale and her father, but it also reveals that the traumatic history of her origins was always already given a voice and a name. Yet, even while recognizing the trauma, the name Raymond chose for his daughter insists on the importance of recognizing the history in order to move forward, an idea that resembles the West African concept of Sankofa.³¹ Turning to—and naming—this history, in other words, does not engender stasis

and impasse but rather serves as a productive point of departure for sustained dialog and transformational change.

Here, I would also like to insist on a parallel between Shale's name and that of and her autobiographical double, Sambo. As Jan Pieterse discusses, Sambo, a word originally 'derived from a Hispano-American term meaning half-caste', came to be a prevalent stock name in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American culture, including product advertising and minstrel shows.³² Often set in opposition to Nat, the stock character that embodied the threatening stereotypes mapped onto black individuals (and whose very name recalls Nat Turner and the threat of rebellion), Sambo, a contemporary of Nénufar, the Banania *tiraillieur*, and other stereotypical racist icons examined in Chapter 1, represents the 'the prototype of the contented slave, the carefree black'.³³ As Leora Auslander and Thomas Holt document, images of Sambo were not limited to the United States; in fact, they discovered Sambo statuettes still adorning Parisian restaurant patios in the early twenty-first century.³⁴ Naming Shale's fictional double 'Sambo', then, gives voice to another history central to the Afropean origin story: that of racist iconography and spectacles held on French soil. As I have traced throughout *Race on Display in 20th- and 21st-Century France*, it is the legacies of all of these histories that immigrant and racial and ethnic minority authors and artists insist must be spoken now.

Echoes of *Blues*—particularly the importance of naming, the concept of Sankofa, and the centrality of creative arenas as venues to work through such questions—abound in Miano's nonfiction *Habiter la Frontière*. In one particularly striking passage, Miano deploys the same central image (transforming mud) used in Shale's naming story to liken her own creative projects to this cathartic dialog:

Il me semble parvenir parfois, à créer comme ils le font, *de la beauté avec de la boue*. Car ces identités frontalières sont *nées de la douleur*. Elles sont *nées de l'arrachement, du viol, de la détestation de soi-même*. Elles ont dû traverser ces ombres pour inventer un ancrage sur des sables mouvants, et *s'imposer, non pas contre, mais parmi les autres*. Elles habitent, au fond, *un espace cicatriciel*. La cicatrice n'est pas la plaie. *Elle est la nouvelle ligne de vie qui s'est créée par-dessus*. Elle est le champ des possibles le plus insoupçonnés.³⁵(emphasis added)

(Sometimes I get to create, as they do, *beauty from mud*. Because these border identities are *born of pain*. They are *born of abductions, of rape, of self-hatred*. They had to get through these shadows to invent their own mooring among moving sands, and to *affirm themselves, not against, but*

among, others. At their core, they inhabit a scar-like space. A scar is not a wound. *It's the new line of life that's created on top.* It's the field of the most unexpected possibilities; emphasis added.)

In the vocabulary of trauma and violence, one hears allusions to *Blues*'s central protagonists, who are born of rape (Shale), whose lineage testifies to forced relocation and slavery (Élise, Shale, Estelle, and Akasha), and who struggle with self-hatred (Baptiste and Malaïka). The central corporeal image contrasting the wound ('la plaie') with the scar ('la cicatrice') insists on the productive and cathartic dimensions of remembering the violence that caused them. The scars that remain on the metaphorical bodies are both evidence of the trauma but also the bodies' capacity to heal.

In the end, Shale's story 'looks back' on both the complex histories that have engendered her and on the ways of looking that continue to shape her subjectivity. Unsure of her origins or the meaning of her name, she oscillates through the different options open to her: a racist stock character (Sambo), a young girl who sees herself in the third person, or a daughter disconnected from her family. Shale simultaneously encounters an abundance of images that do not quite fit her identity (such as the rest of her family's connection with Africa) and a dearth of narratives in which she can identify herself. These two extremes mirror those which Afropean populations encounter in their own lives. They are caught between hearing themselves referred to as 'immigrants' or treated as though they identify as 'African' or 'black' more than 'French' on the one hand, and yet face deafening silence from both French and Africans regarding the histories they have inherited. Just like Shale, then, they must first work to expose and seek to rectify these gaps before they can 'speak themselves'.

It is here that *Blues* distinguishes itself from other 'Afropean' works: in addition to using its content (notably, as I have illustrated, the sisters Estelle and Shale) to expose the relationship between Afropeans' figurative and literal invisibility in France, *Blues* also combats this invisibility through its form. Just as Miano's characters inhabit 'border identities', her creative works exhibit, as Miano herself has put it, an 'esthétique frontalière' (border aesthetic);³⁶ *Blues* is no exception in this regard. The novel's intermedial form, which I read as an Afropean mediascape, constitutes a formal working through of the main threads I have been exploring in this chapter—namely, how Afropeans might seek recognition (especially given the larger institutionalized spectacularism that characterizes the European mediascape), the tension between 'being

named' and 'speaking oneself', the role history plays in this process, and the risks and stakes of turning to and acknowledging the past in order to move forward.

Blues, Intermediality, and Cultural Commodities

A closer look at the novel's title reveals *Blues pour Élise*'s Afropean and intermedial interventions: 'Blues pour Élise' joins two musical references linking black and European musical production. First, 'blues' refers to the genre of the same name that emerged in the African-American milieu; 'pour Élise' alludes to Beethoven's canonical work *Für Elise*—one of Western music's most recognizable melodies. In the composite title, both parts remain distinct and recognizable, yet they combine to form a new whole that differs from either of its parts. What is more, these parts give voice to those connections forged across the Black Atlantic of which Afropea was born—histories whose remembering, as I have been tracing above, marks an integral step in Afropean identity formation.

In addition to underscoring its Afropean orientation, the novel's title also signals its intermediality. It references two musical works, yet the reader holds a printed text—a 'literary' object—in his or her hands. Pairing a musical title with a literary work, both of whose constituent parts are still distinctly identifiable, then, similarly reflects how music, printed literature, and television merge into a third intermedial form within the novel's pages. Just as the constituent parts of Afropea combine to form an entirely new object (while still containing traces of its constituent elements), the novel's intermediality similarly still contains traces of both music and printed literature.

A musicality permeates Miano's *œuvre* in both form and content. Her earlier novels set in Cameroon, often referred to as her 'triptyque africain' (African triptych)—*L'Intérieur de la nuit* (2005) (*Dark Heart of the Night*, 2010), *Contours du jour qui vient* (*Outline of the Coming Day*, 2006), and *Les Aubes écarlates: Sankofa cry* (*Scarlet Dawns: Sankofa Cry*, 2009)—for instance, draw from musical structures and metaphors—a point to which Miano herself has drawn critics' attention: '*L'intérieur de la nuit* suivait une structure AABA classique, pour l'interprétation de thèmes de jazz' (*L'intérieur de la nuit* followed a classic AABA structure heard in jazz performances).³⁷ Similarly, her two earlier works dealing with questions of racial identity, immigration, and

Afropeanism in France—*Afropean soul et autres nouvelles* (*Afropean Soul and other Short Stories*, 2008) and *Tels des Astres éteints* (*Like Extinguished Stars*, 2008)—also allude to a variety of musical works (including those belonging to African-American genres).³⁸ As I have illustrated above in the allusion to Zap Mama's song 'Bandy Bandy', this musicality is also present in *Blues*. Moreover, as Catherine Mazauric has shown in her analysis of musical references in Miano's Afropean novels *Tels des Astres éteints* and *Blues*, these works' musicality goes beyond the borders of the literary text, demanding that the reader access the songs through another means (such as Miano's own website, where she offers the visitor a variety of songs).³⁹ However, where Mazauric sees this element as a sign of the deficiency of what she terms *Blues's* 'transmediality' ('le *medium* de l'imprimé s'avère ainsi borné, la transmédialité appauvrie quand, sur son site personnel, Miano peut, à sa guise, offrir des liens vers des vidéos des artistes qui font le "son" des personnages du roman' ['the printed medium proves limited, its transmediality impoverished when Miano offers links on her personal website to videos of the artists who provide the "soundtrack" of her novel's characters'], emphasis in original), I see it instead as an important piece of *Blues's* larger commentary on the interconnected nature of mediascapes.

I draw an important distinction between *intermediality* and *musicality* in Miano's works: where Miano's earlier works are *musical*, *Blues* is both *musical* and *intermedial*. The key to this distinction resides in how the novel uses both its content and form to draw attention to the commodification of cultural works. Specifically, where her earlier musical works might ultimately produce a hybrid text, *Blues* bears traces of three different cultural commodities: a literary novel, a television series, and a music album. This distinction speaks to the novel's larger intervention regarding the circulation of images and packaging of cultural works in global marketplaces. Ultimately, I read *Blues's* intermediality as a self-contained Afropean *mediascape* that both offers an alternative to the whitewashed European mediascape and reflects on the larger processes that govern how African, European, and black identities are understood and consumed worldwide.

As I suggested above, *Blues's* form bears traces of a television series. Critics have picked up on *Blues's* televisual dimension; Nicki Hitchcott has usefully compared *Blues's* form and content to the American series *Sex and the City*.⁴⁰ Beyond conspicuously drawing attention and simultaneously responding to the relative lack of Afropean presence on French airwaves, however, one element of the way *Blues* deploys

televisual narrative conventions has been overlooked: its relationship to commodification. This television-literature connection is made through two formal elements. First, each chapter concludes with an ‘Ambiance Sonore’ (soundscape) section listing the musical references (title and artist) in the preceding chapter. This format recalls a similar practice in certain television series, especially those found on music-oriented channels such as MTV (which, though it originated in the United States is nevertheless extremely popular in France), where each episode concludes with a recap of the songs and artists heard. Second, *Blues* concludes with an invitation whose tone unmistakably recalls television commercials: ‘Retrouvez les personnages de *Blues pour Élise* dans: Paris’ Boogie, *Séquences afropéennes, Saison 2*’ (Meet up with the characters from *Blues pour Élise* in: Paris’ Boogie, *Afropean Series, Season 2*).⁴¹ Both of these moments in *Blues* draw attention to how commodification and selling products drives television content. The explicit advertising-style announcement with which *Blues* concludes, of course, mirrors explicit commercials (so valuable, in fact, in the US context that shows’ writers shape episodes with commercial breaks in mind). Similarly, the ‘Soundscapes’ function as a ‘product placement’ of sorts—a calculated strategy designed to sell albums and songs packaged in the more palatable format of a TV show, rather than an explicit advertisement. In this way, then *Blues*’s televisual-literary intermediality underscores that no image can be divorced completely from processes of commodification. This insistence on the commercial aspect of images, then, problematizes Estelle’s view that Afropeans must ‘invent themselves, impose themselves, and speak themselves’, raising the question: To what extent, in so doing, do they also sell themselves?

Similarly, *Blues*’s structure also presents itself as a musical album, illustrated best through its table of contents, which announces that *Blues* consists of ten sections: eight numbered chapters, each with its own title, and two unnumbered ‘Interlude’ sections (coming between chapters 3 and 4, and 6 and 7). Like interludes sometimes found on music albums, *Blues*’s interludes take a step away from the main action, transcribing (in Camfranglais, for which a glossary is provided) Bijou’s side of her short telephone calls to her friend in Cameroon. Second, just as some albums contain an unlisted ‘bonus track’, *Blues* contains a ‘bonus’ chapter entitled ‘Newbian luv: Let’s Barack our lives!’ not listed in the novel’s table of contents. Just like its televisual packaging, *Blues*’s musical intermediality draws attention to the commercialization inherent in the medium. In this way, the printed literary text the reader holds in his or

her hands becomes a symbol of other cultural commodities that circulate within wider marketplaces.

It is precisely its multivalency that leads me to read *Blues* as a self-contained Afropean mediascape that reflects on its own construction. As Arjun Appadurai defines them, mediascapes function as 'invented homelands' driven by 'the need of the deterritorialized population for contact with its homeland'.⁴² This definition of 'mediascapes' underscores their particular importance for diasporic and exiled populations, since both (regardless of their intent to return) maintain images of a real or imagined homeland.⁴³ Yet, one might wonder to what extent Afropeans represent a 'deterritorialized' population, especially since Afropeans, though often approached as 'foreigners' in their own land, are nevertheless 'at home' in Europe. Moreover, where might Afropeans' 'homeland' be? Miano's nonfiction writing compounds rather than resolves this tension between Afropea's geographical placed-ness and its imaginary placelessness. She defines Afropea as:

un lieu immatériel, intérieur, où les traditions, les mémoires, les cultures dont ils sont dépositaires, s'épousent, chacune ayant la même valeur. Afropea, c'est, en France, le terroir mental que se donnent ceux qui ne peuvent faire valoir la souche française.⁴⁴

(an immaterial place, inside, where the traditions, the memories, the cultures of which they are custodians intermingle, each one having the same value. Afropea is the mental territory in France that those who cannot claim pure French stock carve out for themselves.)

Miano's definition pairs geographical places with imaginary landscapes, 'an immaterial place' and 'the mental territory in France', to underscore Afropea's nature as simultaneously placed and placeless.

As a self-contained Afropean mediascape, *Blues* confirms this image of Afropea. Many of the artists referenced in the 'Ambiance Sonore' sections reside between multiple spaces themselves, simultaneously calling attention to and subverting impulses to classify them according to national paradigms. Baloji, a Congolese-born Belgian artist, for instance, has spoken publicly about his (and his music's) resistance of rigid categories:

J'aime bien le terme Afropéen. Mais j'ai une carte d'identité belge, j'ai eu la nationalité. Je ne dirais pas que je suis un mutant, c'est un peu fort, mais je vis entre deux mondes.⁴⁵

(I like the term Afropean. But I have a Belgian identity card; I'm a Belgian

national. I wouldn't say I'm a mutant, that's a little strong, but I live between two worlds.)

Another artist referenced in the 'Ambiance Sonore' sections, the rapper Bams—the artist who led the 2014 charge against the performance art piece 'Exhibit B' discussed in this book's introduction—also often finds herself explaining her national and ethnic heritage to journalists. Born in France to two Cameroonian parents, Bams chose her stage name—short for Bamiléké, one of the dominant ethnic groups in Western Cameroon—because it

me permet de toujours avoir à parler de ce que certains aimeraient que l'on gomme mais qui m'est cher. Mon autre Pays, mon autre moi. Titi Parisienne de naissance, Camerounaise de sang et Extra Terrienne de cœur et de Tête!⁴⁶

(allows me to keep speaking about those things that some would prefer I hide, but that are dear to me. My other country, my other me. Parisian ragamuffin by birth, Cameroonian by blood, and extraterrestrial in heart and mind!)

That Afropean artists are often asked to explain their relationship to Africa also parallels the struggle of *Blues's* protagonists in being at once 'at home' in France, yet not perceived as such.

Just as the artists *Blues* references defy placement in national paradigms, so too do their musical compositions subvert rigid generic classifications. For instance, born in East Algeria, Keyko Nimsay fuses larger, transnational forms of musical expression such as jazz⁴⁷ with elements from her local musical context. Another artist mentioned in the novel, Valéry Boston (who grew up in Paris but overtly proclaims her Antillean heritage) actively encourages her audience to read musical works as a signifier of her complex heritage. Her website situates both her and her music between multiple spaces and genres, tracing a complex musical genealogy that parallels her own national and ethnic heritage:

enveloppée[s] d'un patchwork d'influences riches et contrastées [...]. Du jazz à la musette, en passant par le funk et le reggae, *sa musique est à l'image de qui elle est: colorée, riche, festive et positive.*⁴⁸

(enveloped by a patchwork of rich and contrasting influences [...]. From accordion jazz via funk and reggae, *her music is in her own image: colorful, rich, festive, and positive.*)

In promoting herself thus, Valéry Boston co-opts those same narratives, which, as I have shown throughout this book, but particularly in Chapter

3, are widely used to package African authors and artists. She presents herself as the perfect embodiment of the minority artist: not only does she offer her listeners a peek into the exotic world from which she comes, but the identities she presents through her music are 'authentic'. By including works and artists that straddle national and generic borders, *Blues* calls attention to the classificatory impulses governing Afropean media production and consumption.

In tracing the contours of an Afropean mediascape, however, *Blues* posits Afropea as just one node in a much larger network of mediascapes. Alongside the many Afropean artists like those highlighted above, for instance, one also notes other artists easily situated within national and generic taxonomies such as African Americans Marvin Gaye and Millie Jackson; Caribbean artists Soft and Annick⁴⁹ and Janklod; European popular musicians Léopold Nord et Vous and Arthur H.; or Cameroonian musicians such as Francis Bebey and Bill Loko. The resulting 'Ambiance Sonore' sections function as cultural genealogies that testify to productive transnational connections.

Conclusions

Ironically, however, *Blues* is ultimately packaged in the very same ways it contests. The summary offered on the back cover exudes a tone of exoticism, inviting its reader to discover *Blues's* exceptional Afropean protagonists, whose uniqueness stems precisely from their normalcy:

loin des clichés misérabilistes, [elles] adopte[nt] le mode de vie bobo, se nourri[ssen]t de graines germées, se déplace[nt] en Vélib', recour[en]t au speed dating pour rompre la solitude.⁵⁰

(far from embodying the clichés of misery, [... they] adopt a hippy lifestyle, eat sprouted grains, get around using Paris's Vélib' bikeshare system, and resort to speed dating to break up their solitude.)

In insisting on how *Blues's* Afropean protagonists depart from the reigning 'clichés of misery' associated with the minority protagonists found in other francophone works set in Paris, the summary nevertheless repeats those same racial and ethnic stereotypes from which *Blues's* protagonists supposedly depart. Within this claim to relativism and universality ('these protagonists are just like you and me') lies a sinister narrative of exceptionalism articulated along racial and ethnic lines. In this summary one cannot help hearing echoes of Fanon, who,

after reflecting on how his ‘color’ functions as a filter through which all of his social relationships and professional accomplishments are mediated, points out the vicious circle to which this rhetoric of racial exceptionalism contributes:

Negroes are savages, morons, and illiterates. But I knew personally that in my case these assertions were wrong. There was this myth of the Negro that had to be destroyed at all costs. We were no longer living in an age when people marveled at a black priest. We had doctors, teachers, and statesmen. OK, *but there was always something unusual about them*. ‘We have a Senegalese history teacher. He’s very intelligent ... Our physician’s black. He’s very gentle’.⁵¹

In insisting on the *normalcy* of *Blues*’s Afropean protagonists, the novel’s back cover simultaneously announces ‘OK, but there [is still] something unusual about them’. On the one hand, their normalcy (that is, their adoption of supposedly white, bourgeois culture) makes them abnormal (compared to other racial and ethnic minority protagonists in francophone literature), yet their race inherently signals their difference from this white, bourgeois majority. Ultimately, the racial identity of the novel’s protagonists becomes the unspoken but yet ubiquitous filter through which the novel’s paratext insists we must understand their actions. Like Fanon, they too (despite their efforts within the novel’s pages to cast off this burden) become ‘prisoner[s] of the vicious circle’.⁵²

Ultimately, then, *Blues* grapples with the way the cultural marketplace sells blackness as a commodity for consumption, all the while weaving its response directly into its intermedial form. Like the other musical and literary works analyzed in previous chapters, *Blues* turns a critical eye on the institutions responsible for (re)producing images of racial, ethnic, and national identities, while simultaneously reflecting on its own ‘voice’ within the cultural marketplace. What is more, *Blues* underscores how reconsidering these images also depends on revisiting national and transnational histories still all too often expunged from national narratives. It shows how the various arenas of institutionalized spectacularism (official historical discourse, cultural marketplaces, and news media) overlap and intersect.

Blues (and the packaging to which it has been subjected) also implicitly highlights the urgency of opening up another discussion that is complementary to, but yet conspicuously absent from, discussions of how minorities are viewed in France: namely, how whiteness operates. As I have shown above, *Blues* explores the relationship between racial

and ethnic minorities and national identity by charting the contours of France's Afropean population. The novel, however, also begins to contest the rarely examined relationship between whiteness and national identity through Shale's boyfriend, Gaétan, who, though white, was born in Cameroon and feels out of place in France. To return to Miano's assertion with which I opened this chapter, France's 'mémoire blanche' (white memory) has perpetuated notions equating racial and ethnic minorities with foreigners. Discussions of France's mediascape—such as those held at the 'Écrans pâles' conference—implicitly recognize the ubiquity of whiteness on France's small (and large) screens. Yet, while arguing for more and varied images of racial and ethnic minorities, it is telling that none of the participants sought to name or define whiteness, or to interrogate the way it functioned as the presumed 'norm' from which racial and ethnic minorities deviate. As *Blues*'s own back cover illustrates, however, these norms nevertheless function as an unexamined lens through which discussions of race and ethnicity are filtered in contemporary France.

In my view, then, accomplishing the radical work proposed in *Blues* (and the other works examined in previous chapters) also requires us to critically interrogate the visions of normalcy from which racial and ethnic minorities supposedly depart. In the chapter that follows, I take whiteness as my focus, teasing out how cultural works and increasing claims of 'anti-white racism' outline racial and cultural whiteness and their relationship to national identity in contemporary France. Ultimately, the works I examine—like *Blues pour Élise*—espouse a philosophy of Sankofa, suggesting that all populations involved must turn to the past in order to make meaningful progress in the future.

CHAPTER FIVE

Anti-White Racism without Races

French Rap, Whiteness, and Disciplinary Institutionalized Spectacularism

In 2010, French sociologist Saïd Bouamama teamed up with rapper Saïdou to publish a text and accompanying rap album entitled *Devoir d'Insolence* (*Duty to Be Insolent*). In general, the project critiques a 'dual citizenship' model and the vestiges of colonial racism in France that, in the authors' view, continues to equate racial and ethnic minorities with foreigners. Mere months after publishing *Devoir d'Insolence*, however, conservative anti-discrimination organization l'AGRIF (l'Alliance générale contre le racisme et pour le respect de l'identité française et chrétienne; General Alliance against Racism and for the Respect of French, Christian Identity) asked that Bouamama and Saïdou be charged with discriminatory hate speech for their publication. It was not until 2015 that Bouamama and Saïdou were acquitted; the judge cited the fact that 'Les Français de souche, cela n'existe pas' (There is no such thing as 'pure French stock').

Closer analysis of this case reveals a paradox: to fight against discrimination in France is itself increasingly labeled as 'discriminatory'. In fact, this case (and others like it) coincides with the rising currency of the term 'anti-white racism' in France—applied not only to individual instances of violent crime, but also speech acts in which the word 'white' is not even uttered. To level these claims against *Devoir d'Insolence* in particular, however, ironically lends weight to the critiques the text offers—that France's colorblind universalism brands racial and ethnic minorities as 'foreigners' who, even if they are born in France, are rarely considered 'truly French'. Because the very act of bringing the anti-white

racism cases depends on equating Frenchness and whiteness, the case itself illustrates the normativity of whiteness in France.

As I have traced in the preceding chapters, immigrants and racial and ethnic minorities have contested this latent association between visible minorities and foreigners, as well as the institutionalized spectacularism underpinning it. Similarly, scholarly studies have sought to complicate notions of a homogeneous French population by foregrounding racial and ethnic minorities' long presence in and contributions to the Republic.¹ Moreover, as I showed in chapters 3 and 4, authors themselves have pluralized not just notions of Frenchness, but also of racial and ethnic communities in France by highlighting the heterogeneity of experiences and perspectives that defines 'Black France' and 'Afropea'. The work these studies accomplish—dissociating images of minorities from those of foreigners and interrogating the idea that discussions of race emerge from postcolonial immigration—cannot be overstated. At the same time, however, by continuing to affirm that racial and ethnic minorities *are* or *can be* French, in other words, by 'writing to right' the misconception that racial and ethnic minorities are synonymous with immigration, clandestinity, and/or marginalization, these studies paradoxically reinforce—or, at the very least, continue to rehash—the assumption they seek to combat. Seen in this light, affirming the 'Frenchness' of racial and ethnic minorities burdens this population with the continuing duty to *prove* their Frenchness. Though positioning racial and ethnic minorities as a subject worth examining does ultimately pluralize notions of Frenchness, it also nevertheless perpetuates normative gazing dynamics that posit racial and ethnic minority groups as hyperexamined internal other and the white (male) as seeing subject. In my view, doing so extends institutionalized spectacularism to the discipline of French cultural studies.

In this chapter, I therefore propose that ultimately meeting the larger goals of these studies and the calls that emanate from the cultural works studied in this book requires a complementary approach: interrogating the latent association between whiteness and Frenchness. To this end, I turn to two intermedial cultural works—Salif Keïta's rerelease of 'Nou Pas Bouger' featuring the rap group L'Skadrille (2007), and the text, album, and associated music video that make up Bouamama and Saïdou's *Devoir d'Insolence* (2010) project—that propose to turn the gaze back on whiteness. Like the works examined in chapters 3 and 4, those studied here destabilize not only images of Frenchness and foreignness, but also the institutionalized spectacularism that perpetuate them. What is more, the works expose a potential risk they run, as

literature and music seeking to contest discrimination: the mere fact of speaking out against discrimination has itself become a stereotypical narrative expected of France's racial and ethnic minorities in cultural marketplaces. In the end, however, these works resist characterizing this potential vicious cycle as inescapable. Rather, they propose that fighting discrimination and legacies of French colonial racism must go hand in hand with contesting both normative notions of Frenchness and the ways of looking (or not) that legitimize them.

My analysis of these works draws heavily from the principally anglophone field of whiteness studies—a perspective invited by the fact that the authors and works discussed in this chapter have been the subject of ‘anti-white racism’ lawsuits. I supplement my analysis of these cultural works by reading the term ‘anti-white racism’ and its deployment in political and media discourse as a narrative where notions of discrimination, nation, race, ethnicity, and even culture coalesce. As whiteness studies scholars have proposed, whiteness often evades critical scrutiny and passes as the ‘human norm’.² It is therefore from this frame of reference that emerges whiteness studies’s project of what Richard Dyer has termed ‘making whiteness strange’ or George Yancy has called ‘marking whiteness’.³ For Yancy, this project ‘is about exposing the ways in which whites have created a form of “humanism” that obfuscates their hegemonic efforts to treat their experiences as universal and representative’.⁴ As I explore below, *Devoir d’Insolence* participates in this very project, pointing out that what passes for universal in France is, in fact, a racial particularism in disguise.

There are, however, certain obstacles to neatly applying the lens of whiteness studies to the French case, not least of which is that, though whiteness studies remains skeptical of racial categories’ contours, it nevertheless grants their existence. France’s—and Europe’s more generally—colorblind universalist context, on the other hand, explicitly denies race as a politically salient category. This explains why neither the ample anglophone or less abundant francophone criticism taking race and ethnicity in contemporary France as its focus has yet named or sought to rectify this lacuna. In fact, to date, only one sustained academic inquiry on whiteness in France has been published: Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère’s edited volume *De Quelle Couleur sont les Blancs? Des ‘petits Blancs’ des colonies au ‘racisme anti-Blancs’* (*What Color are White People? From the ‘Poor Whites’ in the Colonies to ‘Anti-White Racism’*, 2013).⁵ Not only do I seek to point out and explicitly name this blind spot surrounding whiteness in French cultural

studies, I also contend that it constitutes another iteration of what I have been describing throughout this book as ‘institutionalized spectacularism’, one that underpins the discipline of French cultural studies itself. To pluralize notions of race, ethnicity, and national identity in contemporary France, then, we must not only posit whiteness as a race among others, but also turn our own gaze back around on the discipline itself, and the ways of looking (including the blind spots) we adopt.

If race is dismissed as a category in France, how might whiteness be ‘made strange’? The works studied below offer a striking answer. In addition to ‘mak[ing] whiteness strange’ through explicit discussions of race, they also do so by employing the same proxies—particularly ‘genealogy’ and ‘culture’—used to racialize alterity in France. In other words, beyond just pointing to and explicitly naming ‘whiteness’, the works use the very ways of racing otherness to implicitly point out and name whiteness as a race in France. Additionally, they expose and interrogate how whiteness maintains its status as gazing subject by positioning itself as both ubiquitous and simultaneously unexamined, while minorities remain invisible (that is, conspicuously absent) but yet hypervisible (that is, constantly subjected to scrutiny). Ultimately, the uneven edges that complicate neat mapping between the fields of French cultural studies and whiteness studies offer the most productive theoretical possibilities here. Taking up the works’ call to critically interrogate race, culture, and genealogy in France—and, above all, subjecting whiteness to the same gaze that continues to posit racial and ethnic minorities as ‘others’—will complement existing studies’ pluralizing notions of Frenchness.

In my view, the force of the cultural works’ critique stems from their work to ‘make whiteness strange’ within existing frameworks that racialize alterity in the absence of racial vocabulary. Before turning to the works themselves, I first trace how the concepts they use (‘genealogy’ and ‘culture’) emerge as proxies for discussions of race in France’s colorblind context.

Race and France’s National Family Tree

Though France’s colorblind universalism officially eschews categories of race, ethnicity, and religion, it does not wholly suppress all racializing rhetoric. Fatima El-Tayeb puts it bluntly:

‘Political racelessness’ does not equate experiential or social racelessness, that is, the absence of racial thinking, rather it creates a form of

racialization that can be defined as specifically European both in its enforced silence and in its explicit categorization as not European of all those who violate Europe's implicit, but normative whiteness [...]. The result is an image of a self-contained and homogeneous Europe in which racialized minorities remain outsiders permanently.⁶

In other words, Europe's 'enforced silence' about race does not prevent such discussions from transpiring, even on national levels. Trica Keaton offers a similar outlook: France's discourse of colorblind universalism ultimately 'cannot help but engender what it denies or seeks to evade—"race" consciousness—among people whose visible differences trigger social meanings that are seized upon to represent them'.⁷ Worse still, in her view, as in mine, this rhetoric of race is also set 'against normative [white] racialized ideals of "Frenchness"'.⁸ Not only does a discourse of colorblindness fail to prevent the circulation of racialized (white) images of Frenchness from which racialized 'others' deviate but, by suppressing the vocabulary of race that could be used to interrogate such processes, it also ensures that the underlying institutionalized spectacularism that perpetuates it escapes critical scrutiny.

Over the course of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, these normalized racialized ideas of Frenchness are also apparent through reactionary affirmations of a monocultural, monoethnic, and monochrome France. As David Theo Goldberg asserts, discussions of 'multi-ethnic France' have reignited claims to

'authentic' European identity articulated in terms of cultural Christianity, racial whiteness, and behavioral civilities. Contemporary Europe reinscribes itself as European precisely through re-cognizing and silently, implicitly re-narrating its racial contours in the face of these potentially fracturing challenges.⁹

Goldberg's assessment captures the dynamism inherent in how Europe imagines culture, nation, and race interact. Most important for my study is his formulation of reactionary 're-cognition'—that is, the way in which Europe has mentally redrawn its racial contours. As I discuss in more detail below, episodes such as the 2009 National Identity Debate in France have served just such a purpose.

What is more, as Goldberg's analysis intimates, contemporary Europe also projects these identities back in time to present a unified and unchanging homogeneous national identity as historical fact. As Françoise Vergès puts it, such reactionary claims reinforce the image of 'une communauté nationale imaginée et unie de manière fantasmatique

autour de valeurs culturelles présentées comme traversant les siècles sans jamais être affectées' (a national community imagined and united in a fantasmatic way around cultural values that are presented as having crossed centuries without ever changing).¹⁰ Additionally, such a re-cognition, Jean-Loup Amselle explains, is visible in the resurgence of French 'origin' myths among major late twentieth-century political figures from both left and right (including Giscard d'Estaing, Le Pen, Chirac, and Mitterrand). As he argues, deploying such myths reimagines the nation as an ethnically homogeneous space and, 'as a result, establishes a radical difference between people of "French stock" and everyone else'.¹¹ In this way, Frenchness, opposed to the racial-and-ethnic-minority-as-foreigner, becomes implicitly raced as white.

But if these interdependent notions of race and national identity permeate France's contemporary social and political rhetoric, how have such reactions been framed, absent a wider vocabulary to discuss race and ethnicity? Nothing better captures these complexities than two terms (including one Amselle uses above) often set in opposition: *Français de souche* (a person of pure French stock) and *Français issu de l'immigration* (a French person of immigrant background). In everyday parlance, the former refers to white, French individuals while the latter designates racial and ethnic minorities. These terms conflate race, immigration, and 'post-migratory processes'¹² and simultaneously pinpoint immigration as the origin for discussions of race in France. The term *de souche* (of pure stock) in particular has overtones of family and genealogy. The word at its heart, *souche*, (also meaning 'tree stump') conjures the image of a family tree whose roots are planted firmly within the national soil. In fact, this relationship between blood and land brings to mind the two principal legal paradigms—*jus sanguinis* and *jus soli*—through which nations define citizenship, and underscores how *Français de souche* can lay claim to French citizenship through both.¹³ The phrase *Français issu de l'immigration*, or 'a French individual of immigrant background', on the other hand, posits 'immigration' as an inherited trait, passed down through a family tree whose roots are firmly planted outside of France.

This inherited quality of 'immigration' in France bears striking similarities to the model of social racial inheritance which Naomi Zack has explored in the American context, a schema she has termed 'the social one-drop rule'.¹⁴ As she has suggested, this social one-drop rule is imbricated in notions of kinship:

If a person has a black parent, a black grandparent, or a black greatⁿ-grandparent (where *n* is the number of generations in the past and can

be any degree of ancestry), then that person is considered black. But if a person has a white parent, or three white grandparents, or Z white great ^{n} -grandparents (where Z is any odd number and n is still any degree of ancestry), then that person is *not* thereby considered white. This schema unjustly excludes people with black forebears from white designation.¹⁵

In the French case, one remarks a similar inheritance model: racial and ethnic minorities are often referred to as ‘second-’ or even ‘third-generation immigrants’.¹⁶ The quality of being of pure French stock—a code for whiteness in its everyday use—is, like whiteness in the American model, defined negatively through the absence of ‘immigrant’ kinship.

In France, this vocabulary of immigration and its properties as an inherited trait reinforces images of the nation as a ‘domestic genealogy’ whose foundation rests upon the family unit.¹⁷ In fact, in 2007 French Parliament passed a law containing an amendment proposed by Thierry Mariani (former Vice-President of the Union for a Popular Movement political party) to make DNA testing mandatory for relatives of immigrants seeking reunification.¹⁸ Though highly controversial, the amendment was subsequently upheld in court. As scholars such as Éric Fassin and Dominic Thomas have argued, this amendment effectively divides the French population into two categories: those whose must prove their familial and genealogical ties to France, and those for whom such ties are assumed.¹⁹ Additionally, as Fassin traces, this amendment illustrates the central role played by notions of family and filiation in conceptions of national identity. One unsettling consequence of this amendment, he points out, is that it ‘défini[t] en creux, à partir de l’ADN des immigrés, l’ADN national’ (implicitly defines the national DNA based on its opposition to immigrants’ DNA).²⁰ Hopelessly entangling what are fundamentally distinct realms (biology, family, society, nation), the law also effectively reinforces the notion of purity (*Français de souche*) that continues to mark racial and ethnic minorities as others.

In addition to ‘genealogy’, the notion of ‘culture’ has also become a means of implicitly discussing race in France’s colorblind context. In the colonial period, policies of assimilation and integration posited French national identity as a set of cultural values not (yet) shared by colonized subjects. Legacies of this mentality continue to resurface, even in the twenty-first century. For instance, in 2012, French Interior Minister Claude Guéant proposed that certain practices often associated with Islam, including ‘praying in the street’ or ‘wearing the veil’, are inconsistent with French values and should not be permitted in public spaces such as the French National Assembly. He concluded that ‘toutes

les civilisations, toutes les pratiques, toutes les cultures, au regard de nos principes républicains, ne se valent pas' (not all civilizations, all practices, all cultures are equal in the eyes of our republican principals).²¹ In the same way that the DNA amendment entangles genealogy, nation, family, and even race, Guéant's statement conflates 'culture', 'civilization', and 'national identity'. His assessment assumes that, regardless of birthplace or citizenship, participating in certain cultural or religious practices excludes individuals from true 'cultural' Frenchness.

These hypervisible markers of cultural otherness also serve to reinforce the unexamined norms from which they supposedly deviate. As Richard Dyer has proposed of the anglophone context: 'as long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people'.²² In France, though minorities are not seen and named through an official vocabulary of 'race', or counted in ethnic statistics, they are nevertheless seen and named through problematic proxies.²³ As I have suggested elsewhere in this book, scholars have sought to destabilize this othering rhetoric. Paradoxically, however, as I suggested at this chapter's outset, to affirm how racial and ethnic minorities *can be* or *are* French is to continue to saddle this population with the burden of proving its Frenchness, leaving the association between whiteness and Frenchness unchallenged.

The absence of official vocabulary to talk about race and ethnicity in France suggests the importance, then, of turning to cultural works that grapple with these topics. What is surprising in the two principal works I consider below—Salif Keïta and L'Skadrille's collaboration on a remix of 'Nou Pas Bouger' and Bouamama and Saïdou's *Devoir d'Insolence* project—is that they, like the larger discourse that eschews racial vocabulary, critique the latent association between whiteness and Frenchness through the same proxies that implicitly racialize minorities. In other words, the works both expose and interrogate how Frenchness has been raced white through the rhetoric of genealogy and culture.

Moving Forward by Looking Back: Keïta and L'Skadrille's 'Nou Pas Bouger'

Released more than ten years after the original song (discussed in Chapter 2) and the *sans-papiers* crisis with which it was initially affiliated, the 2007 remix of 'Nou Pas Bouger' delivers a clear message:

racial and ethnic minorities still face as much marginalization as they did in the late twentieth century. Another song released the same year, the cover of Charles Trenet's 'Douce France' ('Sweet France', 1947) by the collective calling itself Les Enfants du Pays (The Children of the Country) is strikingly similar to 'Nou Pas Bouger' in its subject matter (contemporary multiethnic France) and its music video.²⁴ Its tone and message, however, could not be more different from 'Nou Pas Bouger'. Where the former uncritically espouses an optimistic 'vivre ensemble' (living together) mentality, 'Nou Pas Bouger' suggests that such a point can only be reached by taking a step back to point out and contest institutionalized spectacularism—a move that also involves interrogating whiteness. Comparing these two songs more closely reveals how 'Nou Pas Bouger' moves beyond the limitations of 'Douce France': not only does it (unlike 'Douce France') cast a critical eye on constructions of Frenchness and alterity (particularly the vocabulary of genealogies that situate racial and ethnic minorities as 'other'), but, more importantly still, it (unlike 'Douce France') also turns the gaze back on itself to contemplate its own role (and that of the larger cultural marketplaces in which it circulates) in perpetuating both stereotypical images and the institutionalized spectacularism that legitimate them.

At its core, Les Enfants du Pays's cover of 'Douce France' puts forth an extremely positive and timely message through its vocal delivery, musical composition, and music video: contemporary France's landscape is richer because of its citizens' diversity.²⁵ Choosing Trenet's song specifically to deliver this message adds additional weight to the message. Written while he was residing in the United States, Trenet's original lyrics (the same ones performed by the over fifty athletes and artists in the remake) exude nostalgia for the country he had left behind. This same nostalgia has become a perennial organizing principle of the extreme right wing party, which often decries the disappearance of the France depicted in Trenet's song. Les Enfants du Pays's choice of song not only highlights the heterogeneity of those who now claim 'douce France' as their home, but also calls into question the notions of an historically homogeneous French population on which conservative rhetoric of nostalgia draws.

Though Trenet's lyrics remain unchanged in the Les Enfants du Pays cover, the vocal delivery and musical composition depart quite dramatically from the original. In the original, Trenet delivers all of the lyrics alone; in the cover, individuals (of wildly differing timbres and vocal ability) each sing one line from the verse and multiple voices come together on the chorus. This move suggests that, far from one

homogeneous vision and narrative, contemporary France draws its strength from its diversity. In terms of musical composition, unlike Trenet's original, which features simple instrumentation (rhythmic piano, rhythmic guitar, and a xylophone), the cover sounds much fuller. Its instrumentation—including guitars, stringed instruments, accordion, and a variety of percussion—lends a multicultural air, while the minor keys and quarter-tones recall North African music. All of these elements produce a textured, interesting, and harmonically balanced whole, musically reiterating the song's larger message.

Les Enfants du Pays's music video juxtaposes shots of the multiethnic cast of celebrities singing and dancing with shots of a painter who, over the course of the four-minute video, transforms an all-black canvas into his masterpiece: two impressionistic hands giving thumbs up (one blue, one red) accompanied by the words 'Les Enfants du Pays / Douce France' in white. Throughout the bulk of the video, the multiethnic cast (shot primarily individually, or in groups of three or four) performs against solid black or white backgrounds, clad in black or white clothing. The cinematography employs split screens, wipes, and shadow fades to further the black and white motif. The portrait-in-the-making topos stands as a metaphor for the larger video: it paints the portrait of contemporary (and, above all, multiethnic) France. Black and white come together, forming integral parts of the collective portrait.

A superficial comparison of the videos of 'Douce France' and the 'Nou Pas Bouger' remake reveal striking resemblances. In each, black and white chromatics dominate the first three-and-a-half minutes, giving way to color for the last thirty seconds. Both also make use of the portrait topos. Closer examination of how they visualize this portrait-in-the-making, however, reveals their opposing messages. Unlike 'Douce France', in which the portrait's painting is confined to the video's diegesis, the portrait in 'Nou Pas Bouger'—a series of archival video clips projected onto a panel of hanging strips (discussed in more depth below)—draws from already completed footage to construct its narrative. Moreover, whereas 'Douce France' resists deeper delving into some of the more problematic moments in the making of France's collective portrait, 'Nou Pas Bouger' makes these tensions a focal point for its audience. These seemingly small differences capture the significant ways in which the two visions of contemporary multiethnic France differ. Whereas 'Douce France' seeks to promote a 'vivre ensemble' message in the present (the diegetic portrait), 'Nou Pas Bouger' insists that this vision of France can only be achieved through first critically

interrogating the historical underpinnings of racial, ethnic, and national identities in France (including whiteness) as well as the gaze that continues to posit minorities as internal others (the archival film). I now turn to the lyrical and musical composition of 'Nou Pas Bouger', and the visual composition of its video, to illustrate how it moves beyond these limitations of 'Douce France'.

In 'Nou Pas Bouger', L'Skadrille's lyrics remain pessimistic about transcending notions of French national identity that depend on ideas of genealogical and cultural purity. In their view, racial and ethnic minorities 'continueront pour d'éternels étrangers' (will always be considered foreigners).²⁶ Despite this seemingly bleak assertion, L'Skadrille complicate the narrow vision of French national identity that demands its citizens cast off their national origins and cultural heritage, ultimately proposing that Frenchness itself (because of the country's diverse population) has its roots elsewhere. Though both members of L'Skadrille were born in France, they deliberately affirm their national heritage: 'Je suis du Mali / Je suis en France' (I am from Mali / I am in France).²⁷ Such a statement seems to fly in the face of France's colorblind universalist ideals that (at least politically) deny the pertinence of its citizens' national origin. Such a line also resists easy readings. One could read it as a means of strategically adopting a marginalized positionality—that is, performing the very position of 'outsider' that others inscribe onto them. Yet L'Skadrille's bold declaration might also be sincere. Read this way, L'Skadrille demand that the audience consider alternative visions of national identity that would allow space for potentially conflicting constituent elements to coexist.

Just as the duo locates its roots outside of France, Keïta's lyrics use a vocabulary of genealogy (often used to 'other' racial and ethnic minorities) to provocatively suggest that French national identity's roots extend beyond the nation's borders. In the song's opening, Keïta first addresses whiteness, pointing out (in Bambara, translated in French subtitles in the video) that after colonization, 'les blancs sont restés vivre en Afrique, partout en Afrique' (white people stayed to live in Africa, everywhere in Africa).²⁸ Not only does this line resuscitate the historical entanglement between France and its former colonies, it also complicates notions of Frenchness, inverting L'Skadrille's line discussed above. Keïta reencodes 'whiteness' as foreign, complicates views that race can be neatly mapped onto national and continental borders, and celebrates cultural and racial relativism. From a purely numerical standpoint, the whites who live in Africa are no less minorities than blacks in France;

yet only the latter are forcibly removed from a territory they now call home: ‘Maintenant ils veulent qu’on rentre chez nous’ (Now they want us to go home).²⁹

In his second lyrical intervention, Keïta similarly contests how blackness is often equated with unbelonging in France. Praising the *tirailleurs*’ (colonial troops) service to France, he proclaims, ‘Ce n’était pas la guerre de leurs mères, ce n’était pas la guerre de leurs pères, mais ils sont nombreux les Noirs qui sont morts pour cette guerre’ (It was not their mothers’ war, it was not their fathers’ war, but many were the blacks who died for that war).³⁰ Evoking the literal genealogy of the *tirailleurs* (through the terms ‘mother’ and ‘father’) in his larger discussion of how these soldiers fought a war that was not their own, Keïta offers a more inclusive vision of genealogies in which the colonies and *métropole* are inseparable. In fact, Keïta’s role as *griot*—whose traditional function in society was to preserve the population’s history and to sing individuals’ lineages—lends additional significance to these lines and to the song as a whole. Though the ‘Nou’ (We) in the song’s title initially seems to refer only to a limited subset of the larger French population (racial and ethnic minorities in France), this history, as Keïta’s lines suggest, is also the history of France itself. Cultures and genealogies often pegged as ‘foreign’ become an integral part of Frenchness, and the more restrictive vision of ‘Nou’ gives way to an all-inclusive ‘Nous’. In singing the history of this marginalized population, Keïta sings the history of all of France.

‘Nou Pas Bouger’ also critiques notions of national identity rooted in conceptions of cultural purity, articulated most powerfully through its musical composition. Triangulating the major points on the Black Atlantic, the music affirms transatlantic identitarian struggles and reminds the audience that this circulation (in which Europeans are also implicated) bears directly on questions of belonging in contemporary France. Compared to the original musical track (discussed in Chapter 2), which deploys a more global 1980s musical aesthetic, the remake is much more abrasive and multivalent. From the first beat, one notes distinct differences from the original: the prominent xylophone and bassline have been replaced by a drum machine and kora and the upbeat compound rhythm (carried by prominent triplets) is now straight. The remix’s instrumentation has become simultaneously more traditional (the kora is the instrument that traditionally accompanies the *griot*) and more contemporary (the synthesized drum beats are characteristic of hip-hop). The hip-hop elements forge a connection across the Black Atlantic, reminiscent of earlier African American forms of musical

expression such as jazz.³¹ In fact, hip-hop's circulation throughout the Black Atlantic³² and across national boundaries³³ makes it, for Lipsitz, 'the most important recent manifestation of post-colonial culture on a global scale'.³⁴ By bringing together diverse musical traditions, the song charts a cultural genealogy that has both historical and social implications: the topics discussed in the song (notions of belonging, immigration, and race in contemporary France) cannot be divorced from histories of dispersal and subjugation, or those of national and transnational struggle in which the cultural works participate.

Finally, the song not only critiques these restrictive notions of French national identity through its lyrics, its video's visual dynamics also expose the gaze that continues to posit the racial and ethnic minority as the hyperexamined 'internal other' while whiteness passes unexamined. Like the 1989 music video, the remake features a central dancing figure. Unlike the dancer in the 1989 video, who was clad in a traditional mask and grass skirt, the 2007 video's dancer wears modern dance apparel: his torso remains bare and he wears white athletic style pants.³⁵ The contrast between his black skin and white pants inverts the uniform the two members of L'Skadrille wear during the majority of the video—white tops and black pants. Many of the dancer's moves effortlessly blend a combination of slower, fluid motions and faster, explosive ones, demonstrating his precise body control. Coupled with his bare torso, which highlights his muscles, these movements spectacularize the black body, recalling how it was studied, classified, and put on display during the many colonial exhibitions and Negro villages, such as the Exposition coloniale discussed in Chapter 1.³⁶ The dancer's body and movements thus remind viewers of preconceived notions of the black body's strength, flexibility, and 'exotic' movements, and challenge them to acknowledge how these same stereotypes have shaped national identity and immigration discourse in contemporary France.

Additionally, like the original video, the 2007 remake features vertical lines and archival footage that disrupt the continuity of the musical performance; however, their implementations differ drastically. The majority of the 1989 video depicts musicians performing the song against a white background; the three segments of archival footage it incorporates (always coterminous with the entire video's frame) interrupt the musicians' performance. At other moments, the original video evokes histories such as colonization and the slave trade not through archival footage but through sequences produced for the video, such as the close-ups of shackled feet slowly walking left to right or

the handcuffed wrists moving from right to left, analyzed in Chapter 2. The 2007 music video presents the archival footage differently. First, it lacks staged sequences in which actors perform historical moments; the video only evokes these histories through archival footage. Second, the 2007 version's set design—namely, the central panel of hanging strips onto which words and archival images are projected—introduces multiple frames into the video, a feature not present in the original. This relationship between the panel and the video's larger frame, however, is not immediately apparent to the viewer. Even though the vertical lines created by the gaps between the strips are visible, the low light within the larger frame during its first three shots (first: the song's title projected onto the strips; second: close-up archival footage of an African man wearing a traditional hat; third: a medium shot of a group of people welcoming a colonial official) prevents the viewer from noting that the panel structure is not coterminous with the set itself. After ten seconds, the camera zooms out slowly (as archival footage continues to play), and over the next five seconds, three silhouettes move toward the central panel. The low light initially prevents viewers from discerning whether or not these shadows are diegetic to the archival footage, but at sixteen seconds, bright rear lights come up, revealing the three artists standing in front of the panel. The camera then jumps such that the edge of the panel is again coterminous with the video's edge.

Projecting the images onto the panel of hanging strips reflects on framing and gazing dynamics more generally. L'Skadrille and Keïta primarily perform in front of the panel; however, the dancing figure often moves through, destabilizes, and parts the hanging strips, which similarly disrupts the coherence of the images or words projected onto them. This move suggests the need to return to and, more importantly, actively engage with history in order to construct a more nuanced vision of multiethnic France. Moreover, the frame-within-a-frame construction exposes and subsequently invites its spectator to examine the institutionalized spectacularism that posits alterity as a spectacle, while whiteness remains in the comfortable role of gazer.

Finally, this set design also allows the video to turn the gaze back on itself as a cultural object and the role it plays in constructing images of race in France. During the video's final thirty seconds, the artists step through the panel of hanging strips to actively participate in the scene (Figures 7 and 8). The camera captures their transition from the music video set to the world inside the panels through one seemingly continuous shot, panning slowly to the right as the artists (followed



Figure 7: 'Nou Pas Bouger' artists Salif Keita and L'Skadrille parting the hanging strips as the camera pans right.



Figure 8: Camera continues its pan to reveal artists emerging from the strips into a graffiti-lined street.

closely by a multiethnic crowd) walk down a colorful, graffiti-lined street. The group's measured, steady pace suggests progress. During this hopeful march, however, the camera continues to pan to the right, and just as the camera captures the group head-on, the image begins to



Figure 9: Camera continues pan as music video's final shot reveals scene from Figure 8 projected onto hanging strips.

fracture, the color becomes less saturated, and what was presented as one unified image dissolves as the hanging strips return to disrupt the image. Still without any discernible cuts, the camera continues its pan to capture both the image of the crowd marching, now projected on the hanging strips, and a projector behind the scene, before the screen suddenly goes black and the video concludes (Figure 9).

This ending puts the video itself literally on the same plane as the archival images that have come before, to suggest that 'Nou Pas Bouger' itself is but one image among many possible narratives about contemporary France. In taking a self-reflexive stance on its own role in perpetuating both images of alterity, and the institutionalized spectacularism that legitimize racial and ethnic minorities as an object of inquiry, 'Nou Pas Bouger' joins Mabanckou's and Miano's novels which, as I discussed in chapters 3 and 4, respectively, use their intermedial textual form to similar ends. Doing so also allows 'Nou Pas Bouger' to transcend the limitations that haunt 'Douce France': its resistance to critically examining the overwhelmingly optimistic 'vivre ensemble' message it puts forth.

Like 'Nou Pas Bouger', the *Devoir d'Insolence* project to which I now turn probes the ways in which discourses of 'genealogy' and 'culture' put forth latently white visions of French national identity, and also plays with multiple levels of framing. In so doing, it exposes and interrogates the white gaze, while simultaneously maintaining a cautious perspective

on the role it plays—as a commodity—in exoticizing racial and ethnic minorities in France.

Talking Back, Staring Back: Bouamama and Saïdou's *Devoir d'Insolence*

In 2010, French sociologist Saïd Bouamama joined Saïdou, rapper and vocalist from the Lille-based popular music group Z.E.P. (Zone d'Expression Populaire)³⁷ to publish a book and accompanying album entitled *Devoir d'Insolence*. This collaborative effort bridging the ivory tower and the *banlieue*³⁸ is just one example of Bouamama's larger efforts as a public intellectual in France, and fits in to his work as one of the founding members of the radical political party Indigènes de la République (Natives of the Republic).³⁹ This activist-group-turned-political-party emerged just before the widespread rioting in France in 2005, proposing to fight what it saw as continued colonial mentalities in the present. Additionally, one of its main concerns is to promote solidarity between marginalized people, especially in France.⁴⁰

Given how Bouamama's sociological projects, guided by political commitment, draw from both the academic and popular spheres, it is no surprise that he chose to collaborate with Saïdou, whose group Z.E.P. resists straightforward generic classifications and prefers instead to promote itself as musicians united by common political struggles.⁴¹ Though it is often branded a hip-hop group, even its instrumentation testifies to its complex aesthetics: its four permanent members are Saïdou (singer), Salim Sferdjella (accordionist), Kamel Flouka (acoustic guitar), and Saknes (drum box and backup vocals). In fact, though Saïdou does, at times, rap his lyrics, most of Z.E.P.'s musical compositions draw from a variety of musical backgrounds, interweaving French *chanson*-style singing, North African rhythms and instrumentation, an upbeat French accordion, and hip-hop style synthesized drum and percussion tracks to create multivalenced musical narratives.

Turning now to this intermedial project, I trace how both the text and the album critique notions of French genealogical and cultural purity in order to interrogate restrictive notions of French national identity. I first explore Bouamama's writings on the 2009 National Identity Debate in France published in *Devoir d'Insolence* to tease out how the notion of genealogy becomes a proxy for race in France. Then I turn to the album, analyzing closely two tracks in particular: 'La gueule du patrimoine'

(a play on words meaning both ‘The Face of French Heritage’, which emphasizes the critique of the latent association between whiteness and Frenchness, and ‘I’ve had it with French Heritage!’) and ‘Nique la France’ (‘Fuck France’). These songs’ musical composition, instrumentation, and even sampling practices illustrate the album’s larger contestation of notions of cultural purity. What is more, they, like ‘Nou Pas Bouger’, take a step back to contemplate the gazing dynamics that allow for such pure notions of culture and identity to persist. Ultimately, the project also scrutinizes itself to consider whether the discourse of protest also constitutes a site that perpetuates the very institutionalized spectacularism it seeks to combat.

In the *Devoir d’Insolence* text, Bouamama explores the relationship between genealogy, race, and national identity through the lens of the 2009 National Identity Debate discussed in this book’s introduction. He points to the many responses collected on the debate’s website that proposed genealogical or familial definitions of Frenchness (such as ‘someone whose French ancestry goes back five generations’),⁴² as evidence that national identity is viewed as ‘une essence [...] quasiment inscrite dans les gènes, qu’il faudrait préserver des influences extérieures’ (an essence practically inscribed in one’s genetic code that must be protected from outside influences).⁴³ In his view, the debate was merely a screen meant to reinforce the image of ‘une Europe blanche et chrétienne devant préserver sa pureté face aux dangers d’une immigration noire, arabe et musulmane’ (a white Christian Europe that must preserve its purity in the face of black, Arab, and Muslim immigration).⁴⁴ Bouamama’s assessment here bears striking similarities to Zack’s conclusions about race in the United States discussed earlier. Just as the ‘social one-drop rule’ effectively preserves notions of genealogical whiteness, so too do the genealogical articulations of Frenchness latently racialize national identity in France’s colorblind context. As Bouamama’s critique highlights, these identities (white Europe and black, Arab, and Muslim immigrants) are mutually co-constitutive.

Like the *Devoir d’Insolence* text, the music album that accompanies it also contests the myths of cultural (and racial) purity underpinning Frenchness. Many of its songs, for instance, ironically reference tired refrains about threats to French linguistic purity. Elsewhere, the album compounds such linguistic tensions; for instance, its fifth track, ‘Inscris, “je suis arabe”’ (‘Write down, “I’m Arab”’), which might best be described as a spoken word performance, superimposes—but pans to opposite mono channels—its two vocal tracks spoken in different

languages. The one in Arabic (panned left) begins just a few seconds before the one in French (panned right). Speaking simultaneously, the two vocal tracks compete for recognition, challenging the listener to grapple with how multiple identities and narratives might complement or conflict with one another.

The album draws on a variety of influences to call into question notions of national identity as homogeneous culture. Nowhere is this more evident than in the album's ninth track, 'Troubadour', which reflects on the position of the singer as spokesperson for his or her community and a journalist of his or her time. The troubadour tradition originated in France's Occitan region, a multicultural Mediterranean contact zone within a much larger multiethnic France whose landscape hardly resembled the unified nation it has become. Evoking this tradition within a song critiquing rigid notions of national identity not only establishes cultural continuities between the rap and troubadour art forms, it also emphasizes that the very notion of 'Frenchness' from which minorities supposedly depart is a relatively recent development.

Many of the songs also deploy references to canonical French cultural works and authors to a similar effect. Some such references are made in passing ('démâsquar le racisme de Voltaire' [unmasking the racism of Voltaire]),⁴⁵ while others are more sustained. For instance, the album's eighth track, 'La part du fromage' ('Share of the Cheese') recasts La Fontaine's canonical fable 'Le corbeau et le renard' ('The Crow and the Fox')—originally a tale warning against falling victim to flattery—as an interaction between normative French society (the crow) and marginalized individuals (now a magpie instead of a fox). When the magpie politely requests his 'share of the cheese' ('Si maître corbeau sur son arbre perché voulait partager son fromage' [Would Mr. Crow, perched in his tree, kindly share his cheese]) the crow refuses, citing their difference in species as his reason ('lui il ne partage qu'avec ceux de sa race' [he only shares with those of his race]).⁴⁶ Drawing on and subsequently rewriting French canonical cultural works in music dealing with those often imagined to be at France's margins repositions these populations squarely at the nation's center.⁴⁷

'Nique la France'—the song for which Bouamama and Saïdou would face legal troubles, which I discuss below—takes as its focus discrimination in contemporary France, contesting how national identity is often raced implicitly through the notion of culture. The lyrics, for instance, evoke Muslim religious identity as a set of cultural practices (such as not eating pork) that mark practitioners' exclusion from French

national identity: 'Ils veulent l'intégration / Par la Rolex ou le jambon / Ici on t'aime / Quand t'es riche et quand tu bouffes du cochon' (They want integration / By Rolex or ham / Here you are loved / When you're rich and you eat pig).⁴⁸ Elsewhere, however, the lyrics interrogate the supposed purity of this cultural identity; for instance, they point out how some markers of cultural 'otherness', including North African cuisine and music, have become normalized in France: 'Certes ils adorent le couscous / Et Cheb Khaled' (Of course they love couscous / And Cheb Khaled).⁴⁹ Just as 'Troubadour' evokes the cultural and ethnic plurality of medieval France to underscore how the very notion of a unified nation (and a national culture shared by its citizens) is a modern construct, these lines from 'Nique la France' underscore the arbitrariness of what constitutes national cultural identity.

The musical composition of 'Nique la France' (particularly its instrumentation) also complicates notions of cultural purity. 'Nique la France', like most of Z.E.P.'s songs, is comprised of four major musical elements that testify to their multiple identities: a melodic accordion, a rhythm accordion, a synthesized drum track, and Saïdou's vocals. The song's opening prominently features the melodic accordion—one of the most 'traditional' French instruments—whose minor key, long-held notes and chords (rather than single notes) lend a tone of resistance and discord. Though the minor key might create an air of tension in the song—reinforced through Saïdou's vocal delivery—this tension does not devolve into a threatening, hate-filled, or even nihilistic tone. Neither, however is it resolved by the song's end. Rather, the song's musical composition emphasizes the lyrics' force, suggesting that though at times different 'cultures' (all of which make up France) might clash, they nevertheless unite in harmony.

In addition to critiquing minorities' marginalization, 'Nique la France' also turns its attention to iterations of the normative gaze that perpetuate this dynamic. The song's lyrics highlight how whiteness functions as the unexamined, ubiquitous norm, arguing that racial and ethnic minorities' absence in larger arenas constitutes both structural and everyday forms of discrimination.⁵⁰ The song focuses in on two venues where minorities are conspicuously absent—France's National Assembly and its official historical discourse—affirming that 'à l'Assemblée / Il y a que des culs tous blancs, / [Le racisme est] dans vos souvenirs, dans votre histoire / Dont vous êtes si fiers / [...] / Il est dans vos mémoires / Et impossible de s'en défaire' (In the National Assembly / There are only white asses, / [Racism is] in your memories, in your history / Of which you are so

proud / [...] It's in your memories / And it's impossible to dismantle it).⁵¹ This mention of whiteness—the only explicit one of the song—puts the National Assembly's racial composition into dialogue with French history to suggest the latter's whitewashing.⁵² For the artists, the television screen and history books promote racially homogeneous visions of Frenchness where whiteness's ubiquity is not 'seen and named' (to reprise Dyer). The force of Z.E.P.'s song, then, is to do just that: to see and name whiteness.

Another song, 'La gueule du patrimoine', incorporates both authentic and staged audio samples to examine how collective demonstrations and cultural works (including 'La gueule du patrimoine' itself) become a site through which minority identities are made visible. In so doing, it points out the risk inherent in such works: that speaking out against discrimination becomes a stereotypical narrative associated with racial and ethnic minorities and thus perpetuates institutionalized spectacularism in the cultural marketplace. The song begins and ends with authentic audio samples from a news report covering a protest in Marseille in October 2010 against the Besson immigration law.⁵³ In the opening moments, protesters' voices quickly fade to a journalist's commentary, followed by an interview between another journalist and a French individual, who bemoans the rise of immigration and the loss of French culture. A woman's sudden ululation gives way to Saïdou's ironic response to the French interviewee, wherein he celebrates examples often cited as evidence of the decline of French cultural purity ('Sacrilège! Il y a du halal à la cantine, la chorba dans la cuisine / le hijab à la piscine' [Sacrilège! There's halal in the cafeteria, chorba in the kitchen / hijabs at the pool]).⁵⁴ All of the song's elements—Saïdou's diction, vocal delivery, and the musical composition—ooze irony, inviting dialog rather than confrontation.

This invitation to dialog, however, is rebuffed within the song itself during two spoken, staged conversations (2:26–2:36; 2:57–3:06) between a cultural consumer and Saïdou. Through these interludes, the song considers how, paradoxically, its own discourse of protest and resistance has become a new exoticized stereotype ascribed to racial and ethnic minorities. In the first of these two conversation scenes, the song's French listener (panned left) proclaims his appreciation for 'La gueule du patrimoine' itself: 'le métissage, le brassage de cultures [...]. Ces jeunes qui expriment leur colère [...]. J'adore!' (the hybridization, the mixing of cultures [...]. These youth who express their rage [...]. I love it!).⁵⁵ In the second conversation segment, the listener assesses the work's

strengths: ‘d’habitude je n’aime pas le rap, mais ce que j’aime c’est que vous ne tombez ni dans la victimisation, ni dans les clichés’ (normally, I don’t like rap, but I like that you resort to neither victimization, nor clichés) before declaring, ‘puis quelle maîtrise de la langue française!’ (and what mastery of the French language!).⁵⁶ The cultural consumer’s comment clearly indicates the extent to which the artists in Z.E.P. are seen as foreigners in their own country. Musically, these interludes are sparser than the rest of the song; the drum tracks and melodic accordion drop away leaving only the rhythmic guitar and accordion—a musical composition that privileges the listener’s voice and emphasizes his comically exaggerated French accent. At several points Saïdou’s short responses (such as ‘Ah, ben, pas, pas fait exprès, hein’ [Well, I didn’t do it on purpose], ‘ah, bon?’ [oh, yeah?], and ‘ça alors!’ [well I never!]) punctuate the listener’s reflections, but the latter categorically refuses to dialog with Saïdou.⁵⁷

When the critic ignores Saïdou’s synchronous responses, Saïdou instead responds asynchronously in the verse that intervenes between these two spoken interludes. He apes the French listener’s expectations, positing them as contemporary outgrowths of the types of exotic performances expected of colonized subjects (‘obedient Fatmas’ and ‘béni-oui-oui’—a derogatory term used for Maghrebi collaborators with French colonizers):

Oui, c’est mignon, un petit beur qui rap sur la musette
Voici une petite Cosette, fais-nous ta chansonnette
[...]
Vas-y, fais-nous saler sur un air d’accordéon
Raconte des petites histoires d’enfants d’immigration
Raconte-nous les contrôles, les discriminations
Allez, réveille en nous un peu d’indignation.⁵⁸

(Yes, it’s so cute, a little beur [child of North African parents] that raps to an accordion
Here’s a little Cosette, do your little song for us
[...]
Go ahead, throw the book at us with your accordion music
Tell us your little stories of immigrant children
Tell us about the racial profiling and discrimination
Go ahead, awaken a little outrage in us).

In these lines, Saïdou foregrounds a paradox he faces: using his work to discuss discrimination serves to reinforce the association between cultural works produced by minority artists and narratives of discrimination and

hardship. Aping what a French audience expects to find in his music ('the racial profiling and discrimination'), Saïdou illustrates how institutionalized spectacularism permeates the cultural marketplace and reinforces the equation between racial and ethnic minorities and exotic spectacle. In this way 'La gueule du patrimoine' recalls Alain Mabanckou's *Black Bazar* which, as I discussed in Chapter 3, uses its *literary sape* to a similar end. By incorporating the French cultural critic's perspective into his song, Saïdou also examines processes of legitimization to which his work (as well as works explored in earlier chapters) are subjected. As his patronizing and infantilizing diction (the use of the informal second-person pronoun 'tu', 'it's so cute', 'little', 'little song' etc.) makes clear, such larger cultural marketplaces are far from equal playing fields; rather, they favor certain voices and narratives. In critiquing these inequalities, Saïdou also insists on white France's need to define itself negatively against racial and ethnic minorities' struggles. Ultimately, Saïdou's song constitutes a deft preemptive response to any attempt to analyze it.

Though 'La gueule du patrimoine' anticipates and ironically responds to how listeners often view this type of popular music, its ending nevertheless remains pessimistic about the ability to move beyond such a framework where racial and ethnic minorities (and their cultural works) are regarded as an exotic spectacle. After Saïdou's last line, the song once again incorporates a thirty-second authentic audio sample of the Marseille protest during which one hears a group chanting 'J'y suis, j'y reste, je ne partirai pas' (I'm here, I'm staying, I will not leave) and 'Première, deuxième, troisième génération, on s'en fout, on est chez nous' (First, second, third generation, we don't give a fuck, we're in our land) set to whistles, claps, and drums.⁵⁹ The silence to which the sample fades, however, is suddenly and dramatically broken when the exaggerated French listener's voice returns in the song's final second to declare 'J'adore!' (I love it!).⁶⁰ Allowing the listener to have the last word repackages the narrative that precedes it, and suggests that, even though cultural works such as *Devoir d'Insolence* are important venues through which racial and ethnic minorities (and marginalized populations more generally) can speak out against the discrimination they face, they might also ultimately reinforce stereotypical narratives. Saïdou implores his audience to examine both what narratives are legitimated and also the structures (institutionalized spectacularism) responsible for legitimizing them. In this way, 'La gueule du patrimoine' gestures toward interrogating larger systems of knowledge production—a topic I consider

more fully in this chapter's conclusion when I return to questions of disciplinary exoticism.

If 'Nique la France' and 'La gueule du patrimoine' expose this gazing dynamic, another cultural work associated with the *Devoir d'Insolence* project—the video for 'Nique la France'—inverts it. In the music video, two older white men join Saïdou and rap the majority of the song's lyrics. The video begins with a close-up of Saïdou, who proclaims 'Z.E.P., Zone d'expression populaire, featuring', while the two white men—one clad in a blue jumpsuit and the other in nondescript dark clothes and a red cap—sweep the alley in the background. Elsewhere in the video, the white rappers don athletic gear similar to the type often seen in rap videos.⁶¹ The men's clothing, associated with rappers, ethnic youth, and street sweepers, evoke marginalized positions in French society, heightening the viewer's awareness of their dominant subject positions. The video effectively 'makes whiteness strange', in this very narrow context, paving the way for it to be critically examined in spaces where it is typically ubiquitous (such as in the National Assembly).

The music video's tone—like that of the album—is also ironic, exemplified through the white rappers' vocal delivery and the backing track's musical composition, which differs significantly from the original track. Looking directly into the camera, the white rappers introduce themselves using enunciative performances typically found in hip-hop. The first man identifies himself as 'Buster Robert', and the second as 'M.C. Jean-Pierre'—two very generic French names—before 'Buster Robert' states 'deux-zéro-dix' (two-zero-ten, 2010, the year of the song) and 'M.C. Jean-Pierre' proclaims, 'C'est du lourd, gros!' (This is heavy, yo!).⁶² Their decidedly slower pace than that heard on typical rap songs lends a comical tone to their performance and, like their clothing, draws attention to their race and age. The musical composition of 'Nique la France' in the video (particularly the melodic accordion track) differs significantly from the original album's track discussed above. Instead of the drawn out notes in a minor key, the video's accordion plays practically all short, single notes in a major key. The playful tone produced by the musical composition and vocal delivery reduces the possibility of confrontation and instead invites dialog.

The music video also explores and subverts the gazing dynamics in a way not possible in a purely musical work. Specifically, the video stages multiple gazes to position whiteness as an object of critical scrutiny. As Gabriele Griffin and Rosi Braidotti have argued, challenges to normative gazing dynamics have taken two principal forms: 'looking back or



Figure 10: Saïdou (background) surveys as ‘Buster Robert’ raps.

claiming the visual field, rather than looking down or being the object of visual inspection’.⁶³ In the video, one notes both types of oppositional gaze. First, when the video begins, Saïdou looks straight into the camera (just as Meiway does in ‘Je suis sans-papiers’, discussed in Chapter 2), laying bare the gazing dynamic that would position him as the object of the hegemonic gaze.⁶⁴ Second, at various moments throughout the video, Saïdou silently surveys the white rappers, subjecting them to his gaze, which is, in turn, captured by that of the camera (Figure 10). This chain of gazes also implicates the viewers, inviting them to examine their own ways of gazing on the artists and, consequently, race and ethnicity in France.⁶⁵

In this way, the video also comments on ways of seeing, spectatorship, and spectacle. It reverses the role white masculinity typically occupies (normative subject) and presents it as ‘lacking’ through Buster Robert and M.C. Jean-Pierre’s comically imperfect performance.⁶⁶ The video’s visual dynamics (like the act of incorporating the listener’s voice in ‘La gueule du patrimoine’) casts a look back at the white spectator, catching him or her in the act of looking, recalling bell hooks’s ‘oppositional gaze’.⁶⁷ Coupling this dynamic with the video’s insistence on the performed nature of identity (through the exaggerated actions of both the cultural critic and the white rappers), Z.E.P.’s works thus call attention to the scopic dynamics that allow whiteness to evade critical scrutiny before ultimately subjecting whiteness to this gaze. What is more, the playful video offers a progressive model for white French individuals to imagine an anti-racist, anti-colonialist position that avoids the pitfalls

of guilt and blame discussed in Chapter 4 which threaten to forestall critical dialog.

As I have traced in this chapter, both ‘Nou Pas Bouger’ and *Devoir d’Insolence* contest how racial, ethnic, or cultural differences mark individuals as deviating from latently white notions of Frenchness. Recently, however, such critiques put forth in cultural works have themselves been labeled discriminatory. In fact, as I hinted above, the song ‘Nique la France’ found itself subjected to such accusations. Not only were several of Z.E.P.’s concerts canceled (notably one in Audincourt, where the mayor Martial Bourquin refused to rent a room to the group, citing potential clashes with conservative constituents), but conservative anti-discrimination group l’AGRIF brought charges of discriminatory hate speech against Bouamama and Saïdou. It is important to note that l’AGRIF has not brought charges against the music video’s white rappers, who perform the same lyrics as Saïdou does on the album and in live performances. In the following section, I take a closer look at these charges in particular as well as the larger discourse of ‘anti-white racism’ in which they are situated. In my view, these charges ironically substantiate the very claims at the heart of both ‘Nou Pas Bouger’ and *Devoir d’Insolence*: namely, that latent normalized white notions of French identity perpetuate images of racial and ethnic minorities as hyperexamined internal other.

From Anti-French to Anti-White and Back Again

Were one introduced to France’s political landscape for the first time in 2012, one might doubt that France’s colorblind universalist context denies the existence of ‘race’ as a politically useful category—particularly given the amount of attention paid the term ‘anti-white racism’ in political and media discourse. A phrase that seems to further racialize discussions of racial discrimination, ‘anti-white racism’, which originated in the ultraconservative National Front almost thirty years ago, has gained increasing currency in early twenty-first-century France. This trend raises several questions, including: if races are not acknowledged as politically salient categories, how might one conceive of preventing and punishing racial discrimination? What are the risks and stakes of articulating different types of racial discrimination? What are the implications of deploying such rhetoric for French colorblind universalism and for normative (white) conceptions of national identity? And,

finally, from a disciplinary perspective, what are the risks and stakes of the models we use to examine these complexities? To work through these questions, I read ‘anti-white racism’ as a narrative. Situating this term within the larger context of France’s anti-discrimination legislation and anchoring my analysis in three recent examples, I trace how the narrative of ‘anti-white racism’ has evolved, shifting from a term evoked in instances of physical violence and discriminatory hate speech to a charge now leveled against individuals and works that speak out against racial discrimination.⁶⁸ Finally, returning to l’AGRIF’s case against Bouamama and Saïdou, I put this narrative of ‘anti-white racism’ into dialog with the *Devoir d’Insolence*’s message to consider the implications for alternative visions of French national identity.

In order to understand the nuances of ‘anti-white racism’, we must first turn to the history of anti-discrimination efforts in France more generally. As one might imagine, the very act of drafting anti-discrimination legislation in a colorblind context poses particular challenges. Perhaps unsurprisingly, French legislators resisted the vocabulary of race and, as Erik Bleich has illustrated, only added the word ‘race’ to its 1972 anti-discrimination law on the very morning the law passed.⁶⁹ Had lawmakers not done so, Bleich reminds us, ‘there would have been no mention of the word “race” in the French law against racism’.⁷⁰ This initial reluctance to acknowledging ‘race’ in the legislative and juridical realms, however, did not prevent the term ‘anti-white racism’ from becoming used more widely in the popular and media discourse of the time.

Though the group that brought charges against Bouamama and Saïdou (l’AGRIF) first articulated the notion of ‘anti-French racism’⁷¹ in the 1980s, one of the first moments when the term ‘anti-white racism’ garnered widespread attention outside of the National Front’s narrow context came in 2005, when public figures associated with the Zionist movement Hachomer Hatzair et Radio Shalom (including Alain Finkielkraut, Jacques Julliard, and Bernard Kouchner) denounced an event they described as ‘ratonnades anti-blancs’ (anti-white racist attacks).⁷² Using the term ‘ratonnades’, which, in the context of the Algerian War for Independence (1958–62) meant ‘anti-Arab beatings’, to describe this supposed act of ‘anti-white racism’ linguistically equates the victims of colonial racist structures and those formerly responsible for putting these structures in place. According to reports, conflict broke out on March 8, 2005 between a group of (primarily white) high school students protesting the Fillon Law (which proposed significant revisions

to France's high school curriculum and the baccalaureate exam, the most controversial of which were not applied) and another group of primarily racial and ethnic minority high school students.⁷³ News media described how the French police force prevented (white) protesters from leaving the scene, which only further aggravated the situation. Hachomer Hatzair and Radio Shalom characterized the violence thus: 'des lycéens, souvent seuls, sont jetés au sol, battus, volés, et leurs agresseurs affirment, le sourire au lèvres, "parce qu'ils sont Français"' (high school students, often alone, were thrown to the ground, beaten, and robbed, and their aggressors proudly declared, smiling, that it was 'because they were French').⁷⁴ Most reactions criticized (or dismissed outright) Hachomer Hatzair and Radio Shalom's 'anti-white racism' claim. In fact, even the national high school students' union, which spoke on behalf of the victims of this violence, characterized Hachomer Hatzair and Radio Shalom's claim that the incident was racially motivated as 'irresponsible'.⁷⁵ Remarkable in this text is the slippage it invites between Frenchness and whiteness. Though it explicitly claims that the violence was motivated by national origin ('because they are French'), its larger portrayal of the incident as a 'ratonnade anti-blanc' depends on equating Frenchness and whiteness.⁷⁶ Though highly criticized and mostly dismissed, this 'call' nevertheless marks a watershed moment as one of the first instances of use of 'anti-white racism' within a broader French context.

When, later that same year, widespread rioting tore through French *banlieues*, conservative politicians and theorists blamed rappers for inciting the violence and for generally promoting anti-French, anti-white sentiment. For instance, in November 2005 French UMP senator François Grosdidier presented Justice Minister Pascal Clément with a petition (signed by 202 members of the French parliament) calling for legal action against seven musicians and groups.⁷⁷ As Charles Tshimanga traces, however, such clashes between conservative politicians and musicians in France are hardly unprecedented—one of the earliest and most severe examples came in 1993 when the rap group NTM (from *nique ta mère* [fuck your mother]) was fined, imprisoned, and censored.⁷⁸ In 1991, Union for French Democracy representative Charles Ehrmann contested then Minister of Culture Jack Lang's decision to offer a subsidy to NTM because, in his view, it promoted 'gangs who graffiti, rap, and participate in a culture of hip-hop, and through their lyrics and actions, one of virulent anti-whiteness and anti-Semitism'.⁷⁹ Though these earlier cases were not explicitly branded 'anti-white racism', they nevertheless illustrate the growing way in which rap music—particularly those works

expressing frustration with discrimination—has itself been branded as discriminatory.

Another highly mediatized episode of ‘anti-white racism’ that came just a few years later not only drew public attention back to this topic, but it also sparked larger formal discussions within and among anti-discrimination groups. In 2010, LICRA (la Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l’antisémitisme; the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism) brought a civil suit against a twenty-eight-year-old man who, while committing a violent crime in the Parisian metro, is reported to have called out ‘sale blanc, sale Français’ (filthy white, filthy Frenchman).⁸⁰ Though the discrimination case was ultimately dismissed (the man was still found guilty of assault), it opened debates among anti-discrimination groups regarding the existence of anti-white racism and the risks and stakes of acknowledging it. The MRAP (le Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples; Movement against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples), for instance, initially opposed enumerating specific types of racial discrimination, but in 2012 revised its guiding document, specifically naming anti-white racism as one of its main targets:

Promouvoir des identités artificielles et ‘uniques’, qu’elles soient nationales, religieuses, ethniques ou raciales, conduit inéluctablement au racisme. Ces enfermements identitaires émanent des groupes dominants, mais se reproduisent dans les groupes dominés: le racisme anti-blanc en représente un avatar. Le MRAP le condamne à ce titre d’autant plus qu’il apporte une inacceptable et dangereuse non-réponse aux méfaits et aux séquelles de la colonisation.⁸¹

(Promoting artificial and ‘unique’ identities, be they national, religious, ethnic, or racial, inevitably leads to racism. These identitarian imprisonments emanate from the dominant groups, but are also reproduced in dominated groups: anti-white racism represents one of its forms. The MRAP condemns it in this respect all the more so as it offers an unacceptable and dangerous non-response to the misdeeds and consequences of colonization.)

Striking in the MRAP publication is that in making its larger claim about universality (that is, the universality of discrimination), the organization nevertheless cannot help but take recourse to a vocabulary of uniqueness. Though it states in no uncertain terms that affirming ‘unique’ identities leads to racism, it simultaneously adopts this vocabulary of ‘uniqueness’ in explicitly naming ‘anti-white racism’. Other anti-discrimination

groups, such as la Ligue française pour la défense des droits de l'homme et du citoyen (the French League for the Protection of Human and Citizen Rights) and SOS Racisme, critiqued the MRAP's decision, arguing that this revision effectively introduces those same problematic categories (such as race) into the realm whose role is to contest them.

Both the LICRA case and the MRAP's subsequent actions also drew fire from the scholarly community for similar reasons. A group of French academics called the MRAP's decision 'worrying' because it:

ne peu[t] que semer la confusion parmi les militants antiracistes et donner aux véritables racistes l'occasion de citer, à l'appui de leurs propos ou de leurs actes, une organisation dont la raison d'être depuis des décennies est la lutte contre le racisme.⁸²

(can only sow confusion among anti-racist activists and give real racists the opportunity to cite, in support of their words or acts, an organization whose purpose for decades has been the fight against racism.)

In their view, the fact that the genealogy of such a term is situated firmly within the context of the extreme right cannot be ignored. What is more, a dangerous extension of this logic is that (though this is implicit rather than explicit in their text) accepting the legitimacy of 'anti-white racism' conflates issues of structural racism and discrimination with violence and aggressive speech, and effectively blames victims of the former for their own circumstances.

Finally, in 2012 'anti-white racism' again found itself in the national spotlight. Jean-François Copé, then candidate for the presidency of the UMP against incumbent François Fillon, used his public platform to act upon the intent he had outlined earlier the same year in *Manifeste pour une droite décomplexée* (*Manifesto for a Guilt-Free Right*): to 'break the taboo' on 'anti-white racism'.⁸³ For him, 'anti-white racism' is not limited to individual instances of violence or hate speech, but rather describes a much more pervasive mentality:

des individus—dont certains ont la nationalité française—méprisent des Français qualifiés de 'gaulois' au prétexte qu'ils n'ont pas la même religion, la même couleur de peau ou les mêmes origines qu'eux.⁸⁴

(individuals—of whom some have French nationality—despise French people they classify as 'Gauls' under the pretext that they don't have the same religion, the same skin color, or the same origins as them.)

Equating the targets of 'anti-white racism' with 'Gauls', Copé's slippery logic implicitly racializes Frenchness and supposedly pure 'Gallic'

ethnicity as white, recalling Amselle's critique of late twentieth-century political rhetoric discussed above. This diction also exemplifies what Ruth Frankenberg calls 'power-evasive language',⁸⁵ dismissing the possibility that one group has more institutional, economic, and structural power than another. Many speculated that Copé's treatment of the topic was a political ploy to garner more conservative support in his bid for control of his party; nevertheless it appears to have worked—he won the election with 50.8% of the votes later that year.⁸⁶

Looking back on these three moments reveals how 'anti-white racism' has evolved as a narrative in contemporary France. Originally a concept easily dismissed as part of the ultra-conservative National Front's xenophobic political platform, not only has it been taken seriously in legal realms (court cases and guiding documents) when race has played a role in physical or verbal assault, it has subsequently become a much more abstract concept that seems synonymous with anti-Frenchness. In fact, if 'anti-white racism' is as pervasive as Copé claims, it would seem to follow that race is *never not* an issue in contemporary France. To discuss one's origins as well as the discrimination one faces because of them becomes an attack on those perpetuating the discrimination. Overall, this shift in the narrative of 'anti-white racism' from a label applied to individual violent acts to an anti-French mentality perpetuates associations between whiteness and Frenchness. More important still, these declarations also represent a skillful sleight of hand, insisting that artists like those discussed here are attacking Frenchness itself, rather than the legacies of French colonial racism still present in contemporary France. As I have shown throughout *Race on Display in 20th- and 21st-Century France*, contemporary works like those examined in this chapter point out how, to interrogate the legacies of colonial racism, we must also interrogate the institutionalized spectacularism that determines how such narratives will be packaged.

**Conclusions:
From 'Anti-white racism' to Disciplinary Institutionalized
Spectacularism**

Shortly after publishing *Devoir d'Insolence* in 2010, French sociologist Saïd Bouamama and rapper Saïdou found themselves facing charges of discriminatory hate speech. In bringing its charges, l'AGRIF focused narrowly on select lines from only one of the album's songs ('Nique

la France'), reducing the more complex narrative offered not only in the song's musical composition but also the larger intermedial *Devoir d'Insolence* project (of which 'Nique la France' represents only one part). Moreover, l'AGRIF's case, perhaps intentionally, ignores the 'Nique la France' video, naming neither 'Buster Robert' nor 'M. C. Jean-Pierre' as defendants. In its charges against Bouamama and Saïdou, l'AGRIF claims that certain passages of 'Nique la France' (in which, let us remember, the word 'white' only appears once) constitute:

injures (et provocation à la haine pour certains passages) commises envers un groupe de personnes, *en l'espèce les Français blancs dits de souche*, en raison de leur origine (le fait d'être Français de souche), de leur appartenance à une race (*en l'espèce la race blanche*) ou de leur non-appartenance à une origine ou une race (en l'espèce noire et arabe) ou une religion (en l'espèce musulmane) déterminée.⁸⁷

(slander [and inflammatory hate speech in certain passages] committed against a group of people, *in this case white French people 'of pure stock'*, because of their origin [the fact of being of pure French stock], their belonging to a particular race [*in this case, the white race*], or their non-belonging to an origin or a race [in this case, black and Arab] or a given religion [in this case, Muslim].)

To take these claims (that the song's critique of French racism is 'anti-white') seriously, however, depends on equating Frenchness and whiteness—the very same association the song contests. As João Galli puts it:

Par ailleurs, on pourrait réfléchir au fait qu'être anti français, c'est être anti blanc, aux yeux de ceux qui s'émeuvent des ravages dudit 'racisme anti-blanc'. C'est bien la preuve que le cœur du problème est la division raciale qui sous-tend la définition de l'être français.⁸⁸

(Moreover, one can think about the fact that to be anti-French is to be anti-white in the eyes of those who say they are victims of the devastating effects of 'anti-white racism'. This is the very proof that the heart of the problem is the racial division that underpins the definition of Frenchness.)

Though, as I have traced above, France categorically refuses to acknowledge racial categories, the widespread slippage between anti-Frenchness and anti-whiteness illustrates the latent (white) racialization of Frenchness. In the end, the Parisian court rejected the problematic associations at the heart of l'AGRIF's initial claim when it ruled in favor of Bouamama and Saïdou, affirming that *Français de souche* is not a legally recognized category in France.

The more complex analysis of the song I have offered above reveals the tensions at the heart of l'AGRIF's case. As I concluded, the main target of the song—and larger project's—critique is *not* whiteness *per se*. Rather, its target is the implicit racializations of Frenchness promoted through cultural and genealogical rhetoric as well as French colonial racism. Ironically, l'AGRIF's case is, in many senses, more explicit in its discussions of race than the song it charges with 'anti-white racism'. Whereas both the *Devoir d'Insolence* project and the 'Nou Pas Bouger' remix foreground how discourses of 'immigration', 'genealogy', and 'culture' have been coopted to racialize Frenchness as white, l'AGRIF's case (and surrounding discussions of 'anti-white racism') depends on and reinforces this very correlation. The shift in l'AGRIF's own rhetoric—from decrying 'anti-French racism' in the 1980s to 'anti-white racism' in the early twenty-first century—captures the slippage at the heart of the works' critique. It is to this equation (French equals white) that the cultural works examined draw our attention. Unpacking these myths thus requires us to look to cultural works which explore the matrix through which national identity, culture, and genealogy are raced.

Of equal importance, as the cultural works considered in this chapter suggest, is interrogating the institutionalized spectacularism that continues to allow whiteness to evade critical scrutiny. The work 'Nou Pas Bouger' and *Devoir d'Insolence* accomplish goes beyond mere exposition in this regard. Not only do they answer the call to 'make whiteness strange' but, like the works studied in chapters 3 and 4, they also turn the gaze back on themselves to interrogate their own role in perpetuating images of race and national identity.

In concluding, I would also like to insist on a parallel between the types of work done by the texts examined in this chapter and the type of work accomplished by the discipline of French cultural studies (as well as race and ethnicity studies in the francophone realm). From a disciplinary standpoint, many scholarly publications have explored the contours of race, national identity, and Frenchness and have sought—like the cultural works examined here—to destabilize the associations between racial and ethnic minorities and foreignness. In other words, their project has been to make alterity familiar. However, while insisting on the *un-alterity* of racial and ethnic minorities in France, these studies also necessarily simultaneously reinforce the opposite—images of minorities' *alterity*. They also risk participating in institutionalized spectacularism, reproducing on a disciplinary level the gaze that holds racial and ethnic minorities as the object of critical inquiry, while

allowing whiteness to pass unscrutinized. In my view, the larger goals of these studies, therefore, require us to take up the call made by the works themselves.

Ultimately, this project of ‘making whiteness strange’ in France, where ‘race’ is articulated through non-racial vocabulary such as ‘genealogy’, ‘culture’, ‘national identity’, and ‘immigration’, also necessarily complicates existing discussions in the field of whiteness studies, where ‘race’, though problematized, is nevertheless acknowledged. Additional studies of whiteness in explicitly colorblind universalist contexts will offer more nuanced and complex ways of theorizing race in those domains where it is currently ‘seen and named’. The reflections and analyses offered in this chapter mark a preliminary investigation into how such discussions might be opened. With this I offer my own invitation: having seen our image (in the form of the listener parodied in ‘La gueule du patrimoine’) reflected back to us, let us not only accept Saïdou’s call to dialog, but also work through the larger claims of disciplinary exoticism to which his work points.

OUTRO

Looking Back, Moving Forward

My main concern in this book has been to consider how legacies of colonial displays—institutional spectacles—have cultivated more nebulous ways of looking that continue to inform how national identity, race, and ethnicity are understood in contemporary France. The musical and literary works I have studied in this book ‘look back’ in three interrelated ways to expose the relationships between power, privilege, the gaze, and display. First, they suggest that the present moment is shaped by the histories from which it is born; they therefore ‘look back’—just as this book has done—to trace a historical trajectory of display. This type of ‘looking back’ closely resembles the West African concept of Sankofa (meaning ‘reach back and get it’ in Akan), often represented by a bird that reaches back to grab an egg resting on its back.¹ The symbolism is clear: far from becoming entrenched in old mentalities, turning to the past offers the possibility of rebirth and renewal (indicated by the egg). This is not to suggest, however, that doing so is easy or pain-free; however, the works remind their reader that the discomfort of returning to difficult histories is only temporary. Essomba’s *Le Paradis du Nord* figuratively looks back on how the relative absence of France’s colonial past shapes certain narratives about immigrants and their descendants in France today. The characters in *Black Bazar* espouse radically different visions of colonial, pan-African, and even Black Atlantic history, and disagree on the way to commemorate these histories in the present moment. Personal and collective histories merge in *Blues pour Élise*, and it is not until Shale discovers the violence of which she was born that she feels at home in her family once again. *Devoir d’Insolence*, too, positions the act of acknowledging the painful histories of racism and colonization as the catalyst for forward progress.

Second, and more literally, just as the performers in ‘Exhibit B’ (discussed in this book’s introduction) lock gazes with their spectators

in order to prompt the latter to raise questions about their own gaze and the power and privilege behind it, the works I have studied assert their own gaze, making their audience feel the weight of 'seeing oneself in the third person'. *Le Paradis du Nord* 'looks back' at the French jury, just as Meiwai stares back at the viewer in the 'Je suis sans-papiers' music video. *Black Bazar*'s protagonists look on each other, outlining who belongs to which communities (with or without these individuals' consent), and Fessologue slyly 'looks back' at the reader through the novel's literary form: literary *sape*. *Blues pour Élise* similarly 'looks back' at both the old French woman's conservative views of French national identity, and on those individuals who would group Afropop as part of a much larger 'Black French' community. In the video for 'Nique la France' Saïdou's gazes (both on the white rappers and on the viewer) 'look back' at latent notions associating whiteness with Frenchness. Yet, in asserting their own ability to gaze, these authors and artists resist becoming locked in a binary oppositional exchange. Their 'looks back' encourage their audiences to reflect upon the larger forces of the system of gazes itself: what I have termed in this book 'institutionalized spectacularism'.

This final type of 'looking back' moves from a potentially oppositional stance to a plural one; it offers the audience an invitation to 'look back' not just *at* but *with* the authors and artists on the ways of looking themselves. *Le Paradis du Nord* 'looks back' not just at the French jury but also at the larger courtroom dynamics in order to raise larger questions regarding how minorities can speak. *Black Bazar*'s literary *sape* invites its reader to consider how works' packaging in cultural marketplaces (the shelf space they occupy in stores as well as critical discussions about them in scholarly realms) shapes expectations of black, francophone, and African authors. *Blues pour Élise* invites its reader to consider the multiplicity of gazes at the 'Nouveaux Français' exhibit, as well as the histories that inform them. And the interventions of the French listener in 'La gueule du patrimoine' grapple with the stereotypical expectations placed on minority artists.

When taken together, these three layers of 'looking back' reveal how the works resist falling prey to unproductive vicious circles that would leave us locked in a battle of gazes. Returning to Éric Fassin's description of 'Exhibit B', which I discussed in this book's introduction, provides a useful framework for understanding how these ways of 'looking back' offer a productive point of departure. Fassin describes how, after discovering themselves to be the object of the performers'

gazes, the ‘Exhibit B’ spectators lower their eyes.² This gesture clearly indicates that the spectators suddenly acknowledge their privilege and, more importantly, refuse to perpetuate it. Keeping their eyes lowered, in other words, breaks the cycle of objectification because the spectators cease to subject others to their gaze. But looking closer at this act reveals that it also carries the potential of regression and impasse. If the spectators never ‘look back’ at the scene with their new perspective, they can effectively return to their comfortable position, where their privilege remains conveniently out of sight. There can be no empathy and compassion in the diverted gaze.

The texts I have studied in preceding chapters posit the pain (like the ‘Exhibit B’ spectators’ sudden shame when they lower their eyes) of this collective ‘mirror stage’ as merely temporary. Accepting this invitation to ‘look back’ on the scene—this time with new eyes—catalyzes growth. This invitation—that of both ‘Exhibit B’ and the works studied in this book—asks the audience to develop a reflexive stance and gaze upon its own gaze. This paradigm-shifting moment reveals that the gaze which the audience had taken to be universal is instead a particularism in disguise. Ultimately, the works insist on a plurality of gazes—and invite their spectators to consider their own gaze, as well as those the works offer, as but a few among many.

Two cases I have already alluded to illustrate how the musical and literary works’ calls to ‘look back’ are as imperative as ever in France’s sociopolitical and historical spheres. The first—that of the 2011 Jardin de l’Outre-Mer scandal, discussed both in this book’s introduction and in Chapter 1—illustrates how a resistance to ‘look back’ stymies growth.³ Conceived of as an opportunity to celebrate the cultures of France’s overseas territories through public cultural performances, the Jardin de l’Outre-Mer sparked controversy when officials announced its venue: the Jardin d’Acclimatation—the same spot where, eighty years earlier, individuals from those very cultures had been exhibited as ‘savages’.⁴ Scholars, politicians, and activists alike decried the choice, and asked officials to reconsider the venue or, at the very least, to develop an exhibit to accompany the Jardin de l’Outre-Mer that would inform the public about the earlier ethnographic expositions held at the Jardin d’Acclimatation.⁵ For Nicolas Bancel, the 2011 Jardin de l’Outre-Mer organizers’ refusal to offer its spectators a ‘look back’ on the gaze which the Jardin d’Acclimatation previously invited its visitors to impose upon France’s colonized peoples risked allowing it to remain unchallenged.⁶

Bancel’s call to situate the Jardin de l’Outre-Mer within a larger

historical framework also self-reflexively and preemptively responds to some of the critiques leveled against these calls to ‘look back’ at French colonial history: namely, that doing so does not offer rebirth and renewal (Sankofa), but rather fuels unproductive cycles of repentance and guilt. Bancel writes:

il ne doit s’agir nullement de repentance, mais bien d’affirmer que la valorisation de la diversité culturelle issue des Outre-mer ne peut faire l’impasse sur les pages sombres et ambiguës de notre histoire.⁷

(it’s not at all about repentance, but rather about affirming that valorizing the cultural diversity of France’s overseas territories cannot be glossed over on the dark and ambiguous pages of our history.)

Where conservative politicians and scholars such as those discussed in Chapter 4 contend that figuratively ‘looking back’ on the history’s ‘dark and ambiguous pages’ opens a vicious cycle from which there is no escape, Bancel contends that France is already caught up in this vicious cycle, and that ‘looking back’ is the only escape.

Ultimately, the Jardin de l’Outre-Mer organizers neither changed the venue nor situated the event within a larger discussion of France’s colonial display culture.⁸ The controversy, however, did prompt Marie-Luce Penchard, then Minister of France’s Overseas Territories, to ask Françoise Vergès, President of the CNMHE, to investigate the history of France’s human zoos and to propose ways the nation could make these histories more visible.⁹ The diction Penchard uses in outlining the mission illustrates that Bancel had correctly anticipated the concerns that commemorating human zoos ultimately faced:

La République a pour devoir de reconnaître ces mémoires et cette histoire, de leur donner *leur juste place* dans l’Histoire de la France, *sans aucunement occulter le passé et instruire de procès*

(The Republic has a duty to recognize these memories and this history, to give them *their proper place* in the history of France, *without in any way obscuring the past or teaching by putting history on trial*).¹⁰

In her diction and tone, one hears anxieties about revisionism that echo the discussion about the exhibit ‘Les Nouveaux Français’ between the old woman and Carmen in *Blues pour Élise*, discussed in Chapter 4. Where the old woman associates returning to France’s multicultural past with modifying a presumed homogeneous entity (‘France’) that has remained unchanged for centuries, Carmen maintains that doing so does not fundamentally change history, but rather exposes the lens

through which it has been viewed. To create a more inclusive vision of contemporary France requires returning to and pluralizing the past, exposing what has passed as official historical discourse as but one filter among many through which to tell the nation's story.

In her report, Vergès reprises Penchard's diction ('proper place') to disagree with the latter's insinuation that there exist predetermined, parceled-out spaces within larger national histories for what could be labeled 'minority' histories. In fact, Vergès even draws connections between the places occupied by 'minority' histories and those inhabited by the populations born of them:

Ils sont en quête de leur 'juste place' dans la conscience collective de la France, dans un récit partagé de son histoire, et plus largement dans l'histoire du monde.¹¹

(They are in search of their 'proper place' in the collective consciousness of France, in a shared account of its history, and more broadly in the history of the world.)

'Looking back' to French colonial history and how its legacies continue to inform the present moment is not just a matter of filling in a few gaps to give all of France's citizens a sense of presence in national history. Instead, it is a matter of 'looking back' on the very notion that there exists one single, unified perspective that can capture France's (or any nation's) history.

A second case of 'looking back' surfaces in the French commemorative landscape in the early 2000s: if the history of France's display culture (and its associated 'human zoos') has yet to find its 'proper place', immigration to France has been attributed a very conspicuous, yet nevertheless highly controversial (and therefore perhaps not quite 'proper') 'place'. Government officials had already proposed a national center devoted to immigration in the early 2000s, but it was not until 2007 that what is now France's Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration (Museum of Immigration; known as the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration until the summer of 2013) opened its doors.¹² As for the Jardin de l'Outre-Mer, scholars decried the venue selected: the Porte Dorée museum, which had served as the museum of the colonies at the 1931 Exposition coloniale and as the Musée national des arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie from 1960 to 2003.¹³ Alfred Janniot's iconic bas-reliefs depicting the contributions of the colonies to France (primarily in terms of raw materials and labor) still dominate the building's exterior, potentially inviting the museum's present-day visitor to gaze upon the

subject of immigration in the same way the 1931 Exposition's visitors gazed upon France's colonies and their inhabitants.

Rather than allow this history to pass unacknowledged (like the history of 'human zoos' did at the Jardin de l'Outre-Mer), however, the museum contains a permanent exhibit that makes it a focal point for its visitors.¹⁴ The museum's 'look back' on itself and on the history of colonial display at the Porte Dorée site responds to the call issued by the cultural works I have studied in preceding chapters. Doing so interrogates not just restrictive ideas of what constitutes Frenchness, but also the ways of looking on which they depend.

The advertising campaign the museum deployed in the summer of 2013 when it became the Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration also illustrates how it continues to 'look back' not just on immigration or on itself as an institution, but also on the relationship between 'immigration' and national identity in France. Each of its four ads features an image from the museum's permanent collection coupled with a statement about immigration in France: 'L'immigration, ça fait toujours des histoires' (Immigration always causes a stir), 'Ton grand-père dans un musée' (Your grandfather in a museum), 'Nos ancêtres n'étaient pas tous des Gaulois' (Not all our ancestors were Gauls), and 'Un Français sur quatre est issu de l'immigration' (One French person in four is of immigrant background). When they first appeared, these images were met with criticism and public vandalism; individuals defaced some to read, '*Malheureusement*, nos ancêtres n'étaient pas tous des Gaulois' (*Unfortunately*, not all our ancestors were all Gauls), while vandals struck out 'sur quatre' (in four) on others, which consequently read 'Un Français est issu de l'immigration' ([Only] one French person is of immigrant background). Elsewhere, people scrawled racist and xenophobic statements on the posters. These instances of defacement indicate that discussions of race, ethnicity, immigration, and national identity still remain contentious in contemporary France; however, the poster campaign itself marks a continued effort to generate dialog.

These slogans all 'look back' on French national myths. For instance, 'L'immigration, ça fait toujours des histoires' deploys the idiomatic expression 'faire des histoires', which signifies 'to cause a stir'. In so doing, the slogan suggests that the movement of peoples at the heart of shaping any nation's history often leads to uncomfortable encounters, friction, and discord. 'Nos ancêtres n'étaient pas tous des Gaulois' similarly returns to national myths—here the refrain ('Nos ancêtres les Gaulois' [Our ancestors the Gauls]) put forth in French history textbooks

and taught to French (and often colonized) elementary school students in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The Musée de l'Immigration's 2013 slogan, like the phrase from which it borrows (which was initially advanced at a time when French governmental officials sought to unify the nation by deploying a revised common past), suggests that it is time to revisit these national myths, as well as their implications today. The ads go a long way both to break the equation between racial and ethnic minorities and 'foreigners' in France, and to remind their viewer that 'Frenchness' is not necessarily (nor was it ever, really) a stable or 'pure' entity. Moreover, they deploy the vocabulary of family ('grandfather') and ethnicity ('Gaul')—the very rhetoric which, as I suggested in Chapter 5, is often used to implicitly race Frenchness white. Yet they nevertheless also demonstrate their own blind spots: notably the ways in which 'immigration', as I have shown, functions as a proxy for discussions of race and ethnicity in France's colorblind universalist context.

A book on the gaze and display cannot conclude without recognizing the limitations of its own figurative 'gaze'. The works I have studied—put on display, as it were—in the preceding chapters represent but a select few French and francophone cultural productions that grapple with the gaze. In selecting my corpus, I consciously privileged works that exhibited two qualities: intermediality and self-reflexivity. As I have shown, the works' increasing intermediality (*Black Bazar* unites literature, theatre, music, and dance; *Blues pour Élise* marries literature, television, and music; *Devoir d'Insolence* bridges academic studies and popular music) invites the multidisciplinary cultural studies methodology I employ throughout the book. I suspect that the publication of such intermedial texts, as well as texts straddling the analog/digital divide, will only increase in the coming years, which will, in turn, offer fertile avenues for further theorizing intercultural borrowing and new modes of authorship and reading. Second, the works turn a critical eye to their own role as cultural products sold within larger marketplaces in perpetuating and, in fact, profiting from, institutionalized spectacularism. Their self-reflexivity positions their own perspective as but one among many and models the type of pluralism they seek ultimately to cultivate in France today.

Just as the works turn their own gaze back around on themselves, I, too, would like to turn my own gaze back around on this book in order to propose avenues for further inquiry. Any scholarly study must necessarily limit its scope, and though I have reflected at key moments on the role gender plays with respect to the gaze, there remains much

work to be done to extending those conversations whose surface I have only scratched here. I have insisted on the need to pluralize the gaze, and in keeping with this spirit I hope that future work will return to the conversations I open in this book by applying additional—and especially intersectional—lenses to reveal the ways in which gender, sexuality, religion, age, and ability (to name but five factors) might nuance the analyses I have offered here.

Yet, for its own potential blind spots, the main work I see this book doing is, like the works it studies, the cultivation of a double vision in the book's reader. Each chapter self-consciously participates in, while simultaneously 'looking back' at, the discipline of French cultural studies. I have sought to interrogate what it takes as its objects—particularly in this book's fifth chapter—in order to expose the latent assumptions underlying its own disciplinary gaze. In so doing, I have figuratively put not just 'race' (including whiteness) and 'national identity' on display, but also display itself on display—considering not just what the works say, but also how the ways they are displayed (including critical discussions) constitute sites through which notions of Frenchness and 'otherness' are constructed in France. I have identified one latent boundary within the discipline of French cultural studies: that of segregating whiteness from larger discussions of race and ethnicity in contemporary France. It is my hope that doing so will open up new disciplinary terrain where we can examine the increasingly complex grid on which are mapped the identities I have studied in this book.

Notes

Introduction

1 The show was also boycotted in London when protesters blockaded the streets to the venue, leading the Barbican to close the performance on September 23, 2014. On the London protest, see Hugh Muir, ‘Slavery Exhibition Featuring Black Actors Chained in Cages Shut Down’, *Guardian* (23 September 2014), accessed 22 February 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/sep/24/slavery-exhibition-black-actors-cages-shut-down>. Prior to the show’s opening in Paris, the theater directors Jean Bellorini and José-Manuel Gonçalves issued a joint statement entitled ‘Exhibit B: Le débat, oui, la censure, non!’ (‘Exhibit B: debate yes, censure no!’) defending their choice to program the show.

2 The ‘Contre Exhibit B’ group maintains two websites: <https://www.facebook.com/contreexhibitB> and <http://www.contreexhibitb.blogspot.fr>, where they post information, interviews, articles, and petitions. The two websites serve as an archive for how the debate has played out in the French news sphere.

3 I discuss one such spectacle—France’s 1931 Exposition coloniale—in detail in Chapter 1. For a thorough introduction to ethnographic exhibitions see Pascal Blanchard et al., eds, *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

4 Though Marc Cheb Sun, founder of *Respect Magazine*, maintains that Bailey’s whiteness is not the source of his critique (‘Ce n’est pas le fait qu’il soit blanc qui pose problème’ [It’s not the fact that he’s white that’s problematic]), he nevertheless suggests that it potentially reproduces the larger power dynamics Bailey seeks to critique: ‘même si ça se voulait critique, c’est une reproduction, qui, faite par un artiste blanc, pose effectivement d’autant plus de questions’ (even if it wants to be a critique, it’s a reproduction which, made by a white artist, effectively raises just as many questions) (Sabine Cessou, ‘Marc Cheb Sun: Les raisons de la colère autour d’“Exhibit B”’. *Rues d’Afrique* (blog du Nouvel Observateur) (6 December 2014), accessed 22 February 2015, <http://blogs.rue89.nouvelobs.com/rues-dafriques/2014/12/06/marc-cheb-sun-les-raisons-de-la-colere-autour-dexhibit-b-233873>).

5 Mullen qtd. in Doreen Carvajal, ‘On Display, and on a Hot Seat: “Exhibit

B,” a Work About Human Zoos, Stirs Protests’, *New York Times* (25 November 2014), accessed 22 February 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/26/arts/exhibit-b-a-work-about-human-zoos-stirs-protests.html?_r=0.

6 CRAN, ‘De “Exhibit B” à “Exhibit White”’: la position du CRAN’ (24 November 2014), accessed 22 February 2014, http://www.le-cran.fr/communiqu%C3%A9-cran-associations-noires-de-france_lire_de---exhibit-b---a---exhibit-white-----la-position-du-cran-_2014_0_0.html.

7 Exhibit B performers, qtd. in ‘Exhibit B: Is the “Human Zoo” racist? The Performers Respond’, *Guardian* (5 September 2014), accessed 22 February 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/sep/05/exhibit-b-is-the-human-zoo-racist-the-performers-respond>.

8 Brett Bailey, ‘Yes, Exhibit B is Challenging—but I Never Sought to Alienate or Offend’, *Guardian* (24 September 2014), accessed 22 February 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/24/exhibit-b-challenging-work-never-sought-alienate-offend-brett-bailey>. Bailey also responded at length to accusations made against ‘Exhibit B’ in a piece titled ‘Blood on the Tarmac’ disseminated via Facebook.

9 For an exhaustive discussion of the gaze in twentieth-century philosophical thought, see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

10 Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, vol. I (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 93–100.

11 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 235–36.

12 Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); *Histoire de la sexualité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

13 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 2–3; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press 2008), 90.

14 Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975).

15 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

16 For but one example, see the visual dynamics that define Clifford Geertz’s introduction to Balinese society in ‘Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight’, *Daedalus* 134, no. 4 (2005). The contributors to the foundational volume *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986) sought to move away from these visual metaphors and to privilege textual and aural ones, asking who speaks and how in ethnographic writing. See especially James Clifford’s Introduction ‘Partial Truths’.

17 Éric Fassin, ‘La race, ça nous regarde’, *Libération* (25 July 2013), accessed 22 February 2015, http://www.liberation.fr/culture/2013/07/25/la-race-ca-nous-regarde_920834.

18 Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), 1.

19 bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 116.

20 hooks, *Black Looks*, 4–7.

21 George Yancy, *Look, a White! Philosophical Essays on Whiteness* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2012), 8.

22 In this way, these theorists join a larger postcolonial tradition critiquing the way in which European Enlightenment thought positioned itself as the universal human norm. For one exceptional example see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

23 Pap Ndiaye, *La condition noire: essai sur une minorité française* (Paris: Editions Calmann-Lévy, 2008), 68.

24 See especially Fanon's chapter 'The Black Man and Recognition' in *Black Skin, White Masks*, 185–90.

25 Stuart Hall, 'Racist Ideologies and the Media', in *Media Studies: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 273.

26 After receiving special juridical status, her remains were repatriated to South Africa in 2002. See Gilles Boëtsch and Pascal Blanchard, 'The Hottentot Venus: Birth of a "Freak" (1815)', in *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, ed. Pascal Blanchard et al. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 69. For a fictional account that takes the reader behind the scenes at the Musée de l'Homme, see Didier Daeninckx's *Retour d'Atai* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2001).

27 In this book's Outro I discuss one controversy—provoked by the 2011 Jardin de l'Outre-Mer—that sparked larger inquiries into the commemorative space afforded ethnographic exhibitions in Paris. Of course, this relative absence of sites and monuments devoted to ethnographic exhibitions is far from limited to the French or even European context. As Pamela Newkirk illustrates in *Spectacle: The Astonishing life of Ota Benga* (New York: Amistad, 2015), few traces of 'human zoos'—such as Ota Benga's residence in and display at the Bronx Zoo's 'Monkey House' in 1906—can be found in the United States today.

28 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 235–36.

29 Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 15; my emphasis.

30 hooks, *Black Looks*, 7.

31 Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

32 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

33 Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 4.

34 Gérard Noiriel, 'French and Foreigners', in *Realms of Memory*:

Rethinking the French Past, edited by Pierre Nora and L. D. Kritzman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 151.

35 These two terms are not easily translatable. *Communautarisme* refers to asserting a community or minority identity and is seen as divisive in France, though it is selectively applied to racial, ethnic, and religious identities and not usually regional French identities. For more on the racially charged dimension of this term—particularly the ways in which it is selectively applied to racial and ethnic minority groups but, significantly, not to French groups, see Tin, ‘Who is Afraid of Blacks in France? The Black Question: The Name Taboo, the Number Taboo’, *French Politics, Culture & Society* 26, no. 1 (2008), 38. *Concurrence victimaire* has been translated as ‘memory competition’, but in French it implies that one’s goal in making occluded histories visible is to garner more sympathy or attention as a victim than another group. Michael Rothberg opposes classifying such memorial gestures as ‘memory competition’, and instead proposes the concept of ‘multidirectional memory’, which he argues better captures ‘the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and diverse times during the act of remembrance’ (*Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009], 11).

36 Pascal Bruckner, *Le Sanglot de l’homme blanc: tiers-monde, culpabilité, haine de soi* (Paris: Seuil, 1983).

37 The CNMHE was formerly the CPMHE (Comité pour la mémoire et l’histoire de l’esclavage; The Committee for the Memory and History of Slavery).

38 The CNMHE was provided for in 2001 under ‘Décret n° 2001-434 du 21 mai 2001 tendant à la reconnaissance de la traite et de l’esclavage en tant que crime contre l’humanité’ (Decree n° 2001-434 of May 21, 2001 recognizing the trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery as a crime against humanity). See <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT00000405369&fastPos=2&fastReqId=1680676956&categorieLien=id&oldAction=rechTexte>. Later, ‘Décret n° 2009-506 du 6 mai 2009 relatif au Comité pour la mémoire et l’histoire de l’esclavage’ (Decree n° 2009-506 of May 6, 2009 regarding the Committee for the Memory and the History of Slavery), further defined the committee’s official duties: ‘advise the government on questions relating to research, teaching, preservation, or transmission of the history and memories of the slave trade, of slavery, and of their abolition’. See <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000020584544&fastPos=1&fastReqId=451018047&categorieLien=id&oldAction=rechTexte>.

39 ‘Loi n° 2005-158 du 23 février 2005 portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés’ (Law n° 2005-158 of February 23, 2005 giving national recognition to the repatriated French). See http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;jsessionid=BEAB37CF96F324AB9B502C3A9F68B4D.tpdj016v_3?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000444898&

dateTexte=29990101. For a comprehensive study of how the law was crafted and its effects in France, see Nicolas Bancel, “The Law of February 23, 2005: The Uses Made of the Revival of France’s “Colonial Grandeur””, in *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France*, ed. Charles Tshimanga, Ch. Didier Gondola, and Peter J. Bloom (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009).

40 Raphaëlle Branche et al., ‘Les historiens face à l’histoire coloniale’, *Le Monde* (20 September 2005).

41 Françoise Vergès, ‘Les troubles de la mémoire: traite négrière, esclavage et écriture de l’histoire’, *Cahiers d’études africaines* 179–80, no. 3 (2005).

42 Charles Forsdick, ‘Siting Postcolonial Memory: Remembering New Caledonia in the Work of Didier Daeninckx’, *Modern & Contemporary France* 12, no. 2 (2010). I discuss the 2011 Jardin de l’Outre-Mer scandal in more depth in this book’s Outro.

43 Nicki Hitchcott and Dominic Thomas, eds, *Francophone Afropean Literatures* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

44 As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, this activist group (now a political party) emerged just before the widespread rioting in France in 2005. Its main purpose is to contest legacies of colonial racism.

45 The debate’s website (www.debatidentitenationale.fr) is no longer operational, but the responses can still be accessed using the Internet archive (also known as the ‘Wayback Machine’). A summary of the responses the website received can be found in Albin Wagener, *Le Débat sur l’identité nationale* (Paris: Harmattan, 2010), 33–34.

46 Faïza Guène and Dominic Thomas (trans.), ‘In Search of Frenchness’, *Guardian* (28 January 2010), accessed 5 March 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jan/28/france-national-identity-muslim>.

47 Tin, ‘Who is Afraid of Blacks in France?’, 37.

48 Tin, ‘Who is Afraid of Blacks in France?’, 37. Other useful discussions of France’s ethnic statistics include Daniel Sabbagh and Shanny Peer, ‘French Color Blindness in Perspective: The Controversy over “Statistiques Ethniques”’, *French Politics, Culture & Society* 26, no. 1 (2008); Cris Beauchemin et al., ‘Les Discriminations: une question de minorités visibles’, *Population et Sociétés* 466 (April 2010).

49 Patrick Simon, ‘The Choice of Ignorance: The Debate on Ethnic and Racial Statistics in France’, *French Politics, Culture & Society* 26, no. 1 (2008), 16. For a thorough discussion of what is—and is not—permitted in terms of discussing ‘ethnicity’ in France, see Alec G. Hargreaves, ‘Veiled Truths: Discourses of Ethnicity in Contemporary France’, in *Ethnic Europe: Mobility, Identity and Conflict in a Globalized World*, ed. Roland Hsu (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010). For one example of a survey that attempted to quantify France’s minority populations, see the 2008–09 study conducted by the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE)

and the Institut national des études démographiques (INED), which could only approach the discrimination racial and ethnic minorities face in contemporary France via a proxy: the obstacles immigrants and their French-born children face with respect to integration.

50 Valéry Giscard d'Éstaing, 'Immigration ou Invasion?', *Le Figaro Magazine* (21 September 1991).

51 The same study also found that 74% of people surveyed believed Islam to be 'incompatible with French society' (Courtois, 'Les Crispations alarmantes de la société française', *Le Monde* (25 January 2013). http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2013/01/24/les-crispations-alarmantes-de-la-societe-francaise_1821655_823448.html).

52 In so doing, they return to struggles begun by two organizations founded by Lamine Senghor: the Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre (CDRN; Committee for the Defense of the Negro Race), the Ligue Universelle pour la Défense de la Race Noire (LUDRN; Universal League for the Defense of the Black Race), and later the *Négritude* literary movement that had already made a political issue of questions of racial identity in France (and its empire) almost ninety years earlier. For a concise background on these groups, see Pascal Blanchard et al.'s *La France noire: trois siècles de présences des Afriques, des Caraïbes, de l'Océan Indien et d'Océanie* (Paris: Découverte, 2011), 120.

53 Franco-American writer Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes* (2006) (*The Kindly Ones*, 2009) won both the Prix Goncourt and the Grand prix du roman de l'Académie française; Congolese author Alain Mabanckou's *Mémoires de porc-épic* (2006) (*Memoirs of a Porcupine*, 2012) won the Prix Goncourt; Canadian author Nancy Huston's *Lignes de faille* (2006) (*Fault Lines*, 2007) won the Prix Femina; and Cameroonian author Léonora Miano's *Contours du jour qui vient* (2006) won the Prix Goncourt des lycéens.

54 Muriel Barbery et al., 'Pour une littérature-monde en français', *Le Monde* (16 March 2007).

55 Julien Mallet, "'World Music": Une question d'ethnomusicologie?', *Cahiers d'études africaines* 168, no. 4 (2002). See also Timothy Dean Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

56 Tin notes the prevalence of works published between 2004 and 2007 with 'noir' in their title, including Patrick Lozès, *Nous les noirs de France* (Paris: Danger Public, 2007); Rama Yade-Zimet, *Les Noirs de France* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2007); Stephen Smith and Géraldine Faes, *Noir et français!* (Paris: Éditions Panama, 2006); Myriam Cottias, *La Question noire: histoire d'une construction coloniale* (Paris: Bayard, 2007); François Dupaire, *France Blanche, colère noire* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2006); Éric Deroo and Antoine Champeaux, *La Force noire* (Paris: Tallandier, 2006); Raphaël Schneck, *Une Saison noire: les massacres des tirailleurs sénégalais mai-juin 1940* (Paris: Tallandier, 2007); Jean Yves Le Naour, *La Honte noire: l'Allemagne et les troupes coloniales françaises 1914-1945* (Paris: Hachette, 2003).

57 As I discuss at various moments in this book (see especially chapters 1, 4, and 5), those depicted as gazers are overwhelmingly male, as are the objects of the gaze.

58 Dyer, *White*, 1.

Chapter 1: Civilized into the Civilizing Mission:

The Gaze, Colonization, and Exposition Coloniale Children's Comics

1 For thorough studies of the 1931 Exposition, see Jean-Pierre Mercier, 'Image du Noir dans la littérature enfantine de 1850 à 1948', *Notre Librairie* 91, nos 1–2 (1988); Catherine Hodeir and Michel Pierre, 1931, *L'Exposition coloniale* (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1991).

2 Lyautey qtd. in Pascal Blanchard and Sandrine Lemaire, *Culture impériale 1931–1961* (Paris: Autrement, 2004), 5.

3 Pascal Blanchard et al., 'Human Zoos: The Greatest Exotic Shows in the West: Introduction', in *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, ed. Pascal Blanchard et al. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 26–27.

4 P. A. Morton, *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 89.

5 Morton, *Hybrid Modernities*, 31.

6 André Breton et al., 'Ne visitez pas l'Exposition coloniale' (1931). The counter-Exposition, however, would only receive a fraction of the visitors of the colonial Exposition and would in some ways fall into the trap of reproducing the very exoticism it critiqued.

7 Breton et al., 'Ne visitez pas l'Exposition coloniale'.

8 Breton et al., 'Ne visitez pas l'Exposition coloniale'.

9 E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 1997), xvi.

10 Kaplan, *Looking for the Other*, xvi.

11 Maréchal Lyautey, for instance, famously banned troupes deemed 'too savage' from the Exposition, arguing that the type of gaze their presence would invite would run counter to the Exposition's educational mission. Of course, these populations—most notably the Kanak—were nevertheless brought to France and exhibited at other locations such as the Bois de Boulogne. See Joël Dauphiné, *Canaques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie à Paris en 1931: de la case au zoo* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998). For a fictional take on the Kanak at the 1931 Exposition see Didier Daeninckx's 'New Caledonian cycle', comprising the two novellas *Cannibale* (1998) and *Le Retour d'Ataï* (2001).

12 Kaplan, *Looking for the Other*, xvi.

13 Alice La Mazière, 'Nous allons faire un beau voyage', *Les Enfants de France* 75 (1 April 1931), 2220; my emphasis.

14 Anne Donadey, “‘Y’a bon Banania”: Ethics and Cultural Criticism in the Colonial Context’, *French Cultural Studies* 11 (2000), 28.

15 Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 39.

16 The one exception is Catherine Hodeir’s ‘Decentering the Gaze at French Colonial Exhibitions’, in *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, ed. Paul Stewart Landau and Deborah D. Kaspin (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

17 The cartoon artist, Pol Rab, was involved in designing all of these commercial products. See Pol Rab, ‘Nénufar Advertisement’, *Les Enfants de France* 75 (1 April 1931).

18 Rab, ‘Nénufar’, *Les Enfants de France* 69 (1 January 1931).

19 Léopold Sédar Senghor, ‘Poème liminaire’, in *Œuvre poétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 55; ‘Preliminary Poem’, in *Prose and Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 121.

20 Pol Rab, ‘Nénufar’, *Les Enfants de France* 69 (1 January 1931); my emphasis.

21 Roger Féral and Jacques Monteux, *Nénufar* (1931), Sound Recording.

22 Féral and Monteux, *Nénufar*.

23 For an insightful analysis of the connection between Babar’s clothing and narratives of civilization see Ariel Dorfman, *The Empire’s Old Clothes: What the Lone Ranger, Babar, and Other Innocent Heroes Do to Our Minds* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996).

24 Though it was primarily a spoken vernacular explicitly taught to colonized troops to maintain their position of inferiority, *petit-nègre* has also been strategically deployed in written texts. In *Nationalists and Nomads*, Christopher Miller has argued that deliberately deploying *petit-nègre* in the first issue of *La race nègre* (the journal for the Ligue de défense de la race nègre; Negro Defense League) functions as an act of resistance (Christopher L. Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads: Essays on Francophone African Literature and Culture* [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998], 43–44)—an argument on which Brent Hayes Edwards builds to argue that it also confronts the reader with ‘the mistreatment of French West African soldiers during the war’ (52–53).

25 André Claveau, *Joli Chapeau* (Polydor, 1952), Sound Recording.

26 Claveau, *Joli Chapeau*.

27 Hergé, *Tintin au Congo* (Tournai: Casterman, 1974).

28 Hergé, *Tintin au Congo*; *Tintin in the Congo* (London: Egmont, 2005), 27.

29 Pol Rab, ‘Nénufar’, *Les Enfants de France* 69 (1 January 1931). Léon-Gontran Damas’s poem ‘Solde’, (1937) dedicated to Aimé Césaire, contains echoes to two of these garments: ‘J’ai l’impression d’être ridicule/ [...] dans leur plastron/ dans leur faux-col’ (Léon-Gontran Damas, *Pigments* [Paris: Présence africaine, 1962], 39).

30 Jean de Brunhoff, *Histoire de Babar, le petit éléphant* (Paris: Éditions du Jardin des Modes, 1931).

31 As Alain Ruscio puts it, ‘Le thème du vêtement “pour Blancs” accaparé par les “indigènes” qui en font un effet parfois paradoxal, est l’un des moyens les plus fréquents de souligner que les Noirs restent des “grands enfants”’ (The theme of natives taking up clothes ‘for White people’, sometimes in paradoxical ways, is one of the most frequently used means to underscore the idea that Blacks remain nothing more than ‘big kids’) (Alain Ruscio, *Que la France était belle au temps des colonies: anthologie de chansons coloniales et exotiques françaises* [Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001], 443).

32 I also discuss the concept of ‘passing’ in Chapter 3. For more on racial passing in the American context, see Elaine K Ginsberg, *Passing and the Fictions of Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Gayle Wald, *Crossing the Line: Racial Passing in Twentieth-Century US Literature and Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

33 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 122, 128.

34 Féral and Monteux, *Nénufar*.

35 In fact, this is how Catherine Hodeir reads Nénufar’s position: ‘Nénufar [*sic*] exemplified the masculine as fetish, which seduced Parisian women spectators’ (‘Decentering the Gaze at French Colonial Exhibitions’, 238).

36 See for example, Fanon’s foundational description of how the Algerian woman functions in the French mindset as a symbol inviting penetration in *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

37 As I discuss in Chapter 3, one of *Black Bazar*’s protagonists, Yves l’Ivoirien, posits revenge for colonization in explicitly sexual terms (75).

38 In fact, a parallel emerges between Nénufar and Moïse, the protagonist of Simon Njami’s *African Gigolo*. As Susan Gehrman points out, although Moïse is initially ‘ready to fall in love and longs for a serious relationship’, he soon realizes his true position in France: ‘white French women take him as an object of pleasure without considering him as a human being with feelings—he is turned into a sex toy’ (Susanne Gehrman, ‘Black Masculinity, Migration and Psychological Crisis: A Reading of Simon Njami’s *African Gigolo*’, in *Transcultural Modernities: Narrating Africa in Europe*, ed. Elisabeth Bekers, Sissy Helff, and Daniela Merolla [New York: Editions Rodopi, 2009], 148). Later, he attempts to use white women’s attraction to him to his advantage, only to realize that this, too, cannot afford him real power; instead ‘he has fallen into a trap while playing the game of the black male expected of him’ (151).

39 Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975).

40 Franco-Algerian writers Assia Djebar and Leïla Sebbar have responded to these colonial gazes in their fiction. See especially Assia Djebar, *Femmes*

d'Alger dans leur appartement (Paris: Des femmes, 1980); Leïla Sebbar, *Sept Filles* (Paris: Thierry Magnier, 2003).

41 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 118; my emphasis.

42 Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 40.

43 Stuart Hall, 'Racist Ideologies and The Media', in *Media Studies: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 277.

44 This situation also recalls Ousmane Socé's *Mirages de Paris* (1937), in which Ambrousse sells mass-produced wares to the French public at the Exposition coloniale. For an insightful reading of this scene, as well as the larger role of the Exposition in Socé's novel see Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads*.

45 Other recurring storylines for numbers 5–12 included Toffa and Toffette, Zigo and Bamboula, and Kangoroo and Kangoraa. The album underwent a notable shift with number 13, when the series became 'Les Belles Aventures de Pierrot, Marisette et Négro'. At this point, the main setting shifted from Africa to France, and Négro became one of three principal characters, though he is absent from numbers 19–22, and 24.

46 'Négro et Négrette à l'Exposition', *Éditions enfantines* 9 (10 June 1931), n.p.

47 Here, one also thinks of Jean Garrigues's description of the Banania advertisement, which, as Anne Donadey points out, 'serves to cover over the reality of colonization and to reactivate stereotypes of the happy African subordinate' ('Y'a bon Banania', 18).

48 'Négro et Négrette à l'Exposition', n.p.

49 'Négro et Négrette à l'Exposition', n.p.

50 'Négro et Négrette à l'Exposition', n.p.

51 Even if Nénufar is described as childlike, and Pol Rab explicitly refers to him as an 'adopted son' in the comic, the song's lyrics indicate that he not only has a 'chérie' (sweetheart), but also owns his own shop in Central Africa (through a reference to his accounting practices), suggesting that he is an adult.

52 'Négro et Négrette à l'Exposition', n.p.

53 Another comic from the same series goes one step further. In this installment, entitled 'Bamboula and Zigo veulent revenir à Paris', we learn that two of Négro and Négrette's compatriots, Zigo and Bamboula, who, like Négro and Négrette, are on display at the Exposition (though they hardly figure in the Négro and Négrette comic), are so profoundly influenced by this introduction to French culture that they seek to return to France at all costs. The comic ends when, even after the village elders introduce them to the mystical elements of their culture, they still decide to run away from their village, and the elders regret ever having allowed them to travel to France.

54 'Négro et Négrette à l'Exposition', n.p.

55 Although the CD is listed on the FNAC website under the title *Au temps des colonies*, its official title is *Le beau temps des colonies*.

56 For a provocative reading of the Banania imagery (particularly how it changed over the years), see Brett A. Berliner, *Ambivalent Desire: The Exotic Black Other in Jazz-Age France* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002). Note that this translation comes from the published English translation of ‘y’a bon Banania’ in Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008).

57 See ‘La FNAC et le Beau Temps des colonies’, *Pressafrique* (12 October 2006), accessed 5 July 2014, now only available through the Internet Archive at <https://web.archive.org/web/20100312064503/http://www.pressafrique.com/m640.html>; Xavier Ternisien, “Le beau temps des colonies” en disque’, *Le Monde* (11 October 2006), accessed 5 July 2014, http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2006/10/10/le-beau-temps-des-colonies-en-disque_821820_3224.html.

58 Ternisien, “Le beau temps des colonies” en disque’.

59 David Enright, ‘Tintin in the Congo Should not be Sold to Children’, *Guardian* (4 November 2011), accessed 5 July 2014, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/nov/04/tintin-in-the-congo>.

60 Louise Bastard de Crisnay, ‘Racisme: Tintin acquitté’, *BibliObs* (13 February 2012), accessed 6 November 2014, <http://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/actualites/20120213.OBS1234/racisme-tintin-acquitte-en-belgique.html>.

61 The Foreword’s last paragraph now advises the reader that ‘In his portrayal of the Belgian Congo, the young Hergé reflects the colonial attitudes of the time. He himself admitted that he depicted the African people according to the bourgeois, paternalistic stereotypes of the period—an interpretation that some of today’s readers may find offensive’. On the CRAN case see “Tintin au Congo”: le Cran demande à Frédéric Mitterrand de se prononcer’, *Le Nouvel Observateur* (9 September 2009), accessed 5 March 2015, <http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/culture/20090909.OBS0540/tintin-au-congo-le-cran-demande-a-frederic-mitterrand-de-se-prononcer.html>.

62 Mireille Rosello, *Declining the Stereotype: Ethnicity and Representation in French Cultures* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998), 37.

63 As I discuss in the next chapter, the *sans-papiers* deliberately named themselves thus to distinguish themselves from those who had entered France illegally, or who had overstayed their visas. The *sans-papiers* had entered the country legally, but lost their residency status following French immigration legislative changes in the 1980s and 1990s.

Chapter 2: Self-Spectacularization and Looking Back on French History

1 As Thierry Blin highlights in his thorough study of the *sans-papiers* movement, the group did not exclusively comprise sub-Saharan Africans. Though the protesters were predominantly Malians (247 individuals), Mauritians (29), Senegalese (21), Syrians (2), Central Africans (2), Guineans

(2), an Algerian, a Zambian, and four individuals of ‘other nationalities’ made up the group (*L’Invention des sans-papiers: essai sur la démocratie à l’épreuve du faible* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010], 221).

2 The Loi Bonnet and Loi Pasqua represent some of the most significant changes regarding immigration and regularization policy in France during the 1980s and 1990s, restricting the conditions under which immigrants could legally enter France, increasing the government’s ability to detain and deport immigrants, restricting polygamous immigrants’ abilities to obtain a ten-year residency permit, and even removing the right of *jus soli* that, since 1889, had accorded French citizenship to any foreigner born in France when s/he reached adulthood.

3 As Mireille Rosello has illustrated, unlike the French news media coverage of immigration more generally, which often depicted immigrants as a homogeneous group defined by clandestinity, coverage of the *sans-papiers* depicted this group differently, insisting upon their individuality by underscoring their names, ages, countries of origin, and personal trajectories (Rosello, ‘Representing Illegal Immigrants in France: From *clandestins* to l’affaire des sans-papiers de Saint-Bernard’, *Journal of European Studies* 28, no. 1 [1998]), 148).

4 The literature on *sape* is exhaustive and well documented, but for the best work on this subject, see Dominic Thomas, *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007); Ch. Didier Gondola, ‘Dream and Drama: The Search for Elegance among Congolese Youth’, *African Studies Review* 42, no. 1 (1999); Didier Gondola, ‘Sapeurs’ in *Berg Fashion Library*, ed. Berg Publishers (2010), <http://www.bergfashionlibrary.com/view/bazf/bazfo0498.xml?q=sape&print>; Justin-Daniel Gandoulou, *Entre Paris et Bacongo* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, Centre de création industrielle, 1984); Justin-Daniel Gandoulou, *Au Cœur de la sape: mœurs et aventures des Congolais à Paris* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1989); Michela Wrong, ‘A Question of Style’, *Transition*, no. 80 (1999); Janet MacGaffey and Rémy Bazenguissa, *Congo-Paris: Transnational Traders on the Margins of the Law* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000); Jonathan Friedman, ‘The Political Economy of Elegance: An African Cult of Beauty’, in *Consumption and Identity*, ed. Jonathan Friedman (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994).

5 In this way, *sapeurs* join other ‘black dandy’ and minority fashion movements such as the nineteenth-century Cuban *negros curros*, the way African-American slaves repurposed and adorned their clothing, and the Latino ‘zoot suits’. On each of these phenomena, see respectively Fernando Ortiz, *Los negros curros* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1995); Monica L. Miller, *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Stuart Cosgrove, ‘The Zoot Suit and Style Warfare’, in *Zoot Suits and Second-Hand*

Dresses: An Anthology of Fashion and Music, ed. Angela McRobbie (Boston, MA: Unwim Hyman, 1988).

6 Ababacar Diop, *Dans la Peau d'un sans-papiers* (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

7 As Laurent Dubois has provocatively shown in 'La République Métissée: Citizenship, Colonialism, and the Borders of French History', the *sans-papiers* rhetoric united French universalist discourse—itself a notion that was forged through the actions of Caribbean slaves—and claims of cultural difference.

8 The most notable example is Azouz Begag's *Le Gone du Chaâba* (Paris: Seuil, 1986).

9 Notable novels include Mehdi Charef's *Le Thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed* (1983) (*Tea in the Harem*, 1989) and Faïza Guène's *Kiffe kiffe demain* (2004) (*Kiffe Kiffe Tomorrow*, 2006). *Beur* and *banlieue* films and television shows also gained prominence during this time; the most notable example is Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine*. For an excellent analysis of *beur* and *banlieue* filmmaking, see Carrie Tarr's *Reframing Difference: Beur and Banlieue Filmmaking in France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005). For an overview of *beur* television series and an in-depth look at one in particular (*La Famille Ramdam*), see Alec G. Hargreaves, 'Gatekeepers and Gateways: Post-Colonial Minorities and French Television', in *Post-Colonial Cultures in France*, ed. Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney (New York: Routledge, 1997); Alec G. Hargreaves, 'La Famille Ramdan: Un "sit-com" pur beur', *Hommes & Migrations* 1147 (1991).

10 Mireille Rosello, *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); Kathryn Kleppinger, *Branding the 'Beur' Author: Minority Writing and the Media in France, 1983–2013* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).

11 Rosello, *Postcolonial Hospitality*, 25.

12 Jacques Chevrier, 'Afrique(s)-sur-Seine: autour de la notion de "migritude"', *Notre librairie* 155–56 (2004): 97–99. Select works not discussed at length in this chapter include films such as Thomas Gilou's *Black Mic-Mac* (1982) and Daniel Vigne's *Fatou la Malienne* (*Fatou, the Malian*, 2001); fiction such as Alain Mabanckou's *Bleu-Blanc-Rouge* (1998) (*Blue White Red*, 2013), Simon Njami's *African gigolo* (1980), Daniel Biyaoula's *L'Impasse* (*The Impasse*, 1996), Calixthe Beyala's *Loukoum: Le Petit Prince de Belleville* (1992) (*Loukoum: The 'Little Prince' of Belleville*, 1995), and Fatou Diome's *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003) (*Belly of the Atlantic*, 2006); nonfiction works such as the testimonial by Ababacar Diop, who positioned himself as the spokesperson for the *sans-papiers* protesters, *Dans la peau d'un sans-papiers* (*In the Shoes of a sans-papiers*, 1997); and music such as Ivorian *zouglou* group Magic System's 'Un Gaou à Paris' ('An Idiot in Paris', 2003). See also Carrie Tarr's overview on early 2000s West African immigration in cinema: 'Transnational Identities, Transnational Spaces: West Africans in Paris in Contemporary French Cinema', *Modern and Contemporary France* 15, no. 1 (2007).

13 See in particular Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, and Sandrine Lemaire, 'From Scientific Racism to Popular and Colonial Racism in France and the West', in *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, ed. Pascal Blanchard et al. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008); Herman Lebovics, 'The Zoos of the Exposition Coloniale Internationale, Paris 1931', in *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, ed. Pascal Blanchard et al. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008); Gilles Boëtsch and Yann Adrdagna, 'Human Zoos: The "Savage" and the Anthropologist', in *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, ed. Pascal Blanchard et al. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

14 Other proposed classifications include Benetta Jules Rosette's 'Afro-Parisianism', Odile Cazenave's 'Afrique sur Seine' (Africa on the Seine), or Abdourahman Waberi's 'enfants de la postcolonie' (children of the postcolony). Like *migritude*, these classifications depend on biographical information about the authors. See Bennetta Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris: The African Writers' Landscape* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Odile M. Cazenave, *Afrique sur Seine: une nouvelle génération de romanciers africains à Paris* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003); Abdourahman A Waberi, 'Les enfants de la postcolonie: Esquisse d'une nouvelle génération d'écrivains francophones d'Afrique noire', *Notre librairie* 135 (1998).

15 Alain Mabanckou, *Le Sanglot de l'homme noir* (Paris: Fayard, 2012), 150–51; Boniface Mongo-Mboussa, *Désir d'Afrique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001). See also Thomas, *Black France*, 22; Lydie Moudileno, 'Littérature et postcolonie', *Africultures* 28 (2000).

16 Jean-Roger Essomba, 'De la reconnaissance', *Africultures* 15 (1999).

17 Huggan (15) qtd. in Lydie Moudileno, 'Fame, Celebrity, and the Conditions of Visibility of the Postcolonial Writer', *Yale French Studies* 120 (2011), 64.

18 Cazenave, *Afrique sur Seine*, 123.

19 Siobhán Shilton, 'Travel Literature in French Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 10, no. 1 (2006).

20 See also Aedín Ní Loingsigh, *Postcolonial Eyes: Intercontinental Travel in Francophone African Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009).

21 In a forthcoming article entitled 'Tributary Histories' Flowing into National Waterways: European Rivers in Sub-Saharan African Immigration Literature', I flesh out the significance of European rivers in *Le Paradis du Nord*, reading this text's hydrography of immigration alongside two other sub-Saharan African immigration narratives: Ousmane Socé's *Mirages de Paris* (1937) and Donatongo Ndongo-Bidyogo's short story 'El Sueño' ('The Dream', 1973). I contend that these three works use European waterways to remap

imperial violence committed in Africa onto the hydrography of colonial and postcolonial Europe.

22 Note: all references to *Le Paradis du Nord* in this chapter will be given in parentheses.

23 Iain Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 149. Here, one also thinks of Derek Walcott's canonical poem 'The Sea is History'.

24 Christopher L. Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 51.

25 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 17.

26 Rosello, 'Representing Illegal Immigrants in France', 144.

27 Rosello, 'Representing Illegal Immigrants in France', 144.

28 Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 2.

29 This moment also calls to mind the bodies floating in the Seine on the night of October 17, 1961 when Parisian police forces violently repressed Algerians peacefully protesting a racist curfew enacted against them twelve days earlier. Although no definitive conclusion has been reached regarding the number of victims, the best estimate seems around 200. Many bodies were recovered from the Seine. See Jim House and Neil MacMaster, *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Jean-Luc Einaudi, *La Bataille de Paris: 17 octobre 1961* (Paris: Seuil, 1991); Jean-Paul Brunet, *Police contre FLN: le drame d'octobre 1961* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999).

30 In recent years, scholars have begun turning to water spaces as alternatives to nationally bounded histories and identities; however, often the object of study is a large body of water that can serve as a challenge to national histories because they connect multiple countries, such as the Mediterranean Sea or the Atlantic Ocean. See for example Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993) and Chambers's *Mediterranean Crossings* (2008). Applying this same paradigm to national bodies of water such as the Seine, which flows entirely within France, could be a fruitful point of departure for subverting territorially defined histories (and the resulting ideas of national identity) from within, and is a subject that could complement emerging perspectives of interdisciplinary water-based area studies.

31 Françoise Vergès, 'Les Troubles de la mémoire: traite négrière, esclavage et écriture de l'histoire', *Cahiers d'études africaines* 179–80, no. 3 (2005), 1144.

32 Achille Mbembe, 'The Republic and Its Beast: On the Riots in the French Banlieues', in *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France*, ed. Charles Tshimanga, Ch. Didier Gondola, and Peter J. Bloom (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 50.

33 See Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle*, 364–67; Thomas, *Black France*, 115–28.

34 Beyala, *Le Petit Prince de Belleville*, 29; emphasis original.

35 Thomas, *Black France*, 116–17.

36 Thomas, *Black France*, 100.

37 Carla L. Peterson, ‘Capitalism and the 1850s African-American Novel’, *American Literary History* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 565–66.

38 Peterson, ‘Capitalism and the 1850s African-American Novel’, 562; emphasis added.

39 Allison Deventer and Dominic Thomas, ‘Afro-European Studies: Emerging Fields and New Directions’, in *A Companion to Comparative Literature*, ed. Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 345. For more on early Italian migrant literature see Alessandra Di Maio, ‘Black Italia: Contemporary Migrant Writers from Africa’, in *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine, Trica Danielle Keaton, and Stephen Small (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

40 Richard Watts, *Packaging Post/Coloniality: The Manufacture of Literary Identity in the Francophone World* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 3–4.

41 Essomba, ‘De la Reconnaissance’, 14–15.

42 In fact, as Winders notes, over the years these legislative hurdles wore on Keïta to the point that he decided to permanently relocate himself and his family to Bamako in 1997 (*Paris Africain: Rhythms of the African Diaspora* [New York: Basingstoke, 2006], 59, 107).

43 Interestingly, Keïta is descended from the royal lineage of Sundiata Keïta, which normally would exclude him from occupying the role of *griot*—a separate inherited caste that serves the ruler in traditional Malian society. However, Keïta’s albinism caused him to be disowned by his family, allowing him to pursue his passion for music and to study *griot* singing.

44 Of course, many scholars, journalists, and artists note that the *griot*’s role has changed significantly in recent years in many African regions. For instance, Dani Kouyaté’s film *Keïta! ou l’héritage du griot* (1995) (*Keïta! Voice of the Griot*, 1996) presents contrasting views of *griots*: in the main narrative, a traditional *griot* instructs a young boy on the meaning of his name, thereby recounting the oral history of the Malian empire, but at other moments of the film, the viewer is introduced to more modern *griots* who sing the praises of notable attendees at events in exchange for money. This latter image of the *griot* is now more pervasive in West African society and, as Dorothea Schulz discusses, these types of *griot* have been criticized for privileging money over tradition (‘Praise without Enchantment: Griots, Broadcast Media, and the Politics of Tradition in Mali’. *Africa Today* 44, no. 4 [Oct–Dec 1997], 449). This mistrust of *griots*’ intentions, however, is not exclusive to the postcolonial moment. As Christopher Miller shows, a similar skepticism toward *griots* is already present in earlier works such as Laye Camara’s *L’Enfant noir* (*The Dark Child*, 1953): ‘The *griot* can enter your home and demand what he wants;

you refuse at your peril, for his powers of speech, usually used to praise, can be turned from *chant* to *chantage*, from praise song to bribery. Uninvited, a *griot* may begin singing your genealogy; if a sufficient gift is not forthcoming, he may begin weaving in sly references to skeletons in your closet such as ancestors who were slaves' (*Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa* [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990], 83).

45 Salif Keïta, *Ko-Yan* (New York: Island Records, 1989), CD. The lyrics are sung in Bambara; here, the lyrics are quoted from the English translation in the CD's liner notes.

46 Salif Keïta, *Ko-Yan*.

47 Salif Keïta, *Ko-Yan*.

48 Lydie Moudileno, *Littératures africaines francophones des années 1980 et 1990*, 2nd ed. (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2003).

49 Moudileno, *Littératures africaines francophones*, 56.

50 The second Loi Pasqua revoked automatic citizenship for children born in France to immigrant parents. Instead, these children had to file a formal 'manifestation de volonté' to become a French citizen between the ages of 16 and 21. The Loi Guigou of 1998 later repealed the 'manifestation de volonté' requirement.

51 The chorus's composition recalls other social equality movements from the same time, most notably the group SOS-Racisme, founded in 1984, for whom 'Nou Pas Bouger' served as the unofficial anthem, as Winders points out (*Paris Africain*, 59).

52 Rosello, 'Representing Illegal Immigrants in France', 139.

53 Manu Chao, *Clandestino* (France: Virgin France, 1998), CD.

54 Barbara Lebrun, 'Music for Sans—Papiers in the Republic', *Third Text* 20, no. 6 (2006), 718.

55 Meïway, *Golgotha* (Paris: BMG France, 2004), CD.

56 Meïway, *Golgotha*.

57 Meïway, *Golgotha*.

58 Pascal Blanchard, 'Histoire coloniale: la nouvelle guerre des mémoires', *Cultures sud* 165 (June 2007), 37.

59 Pascal Blanchard et al., eds., *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

60 George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 135.

61 I discuss this idea further in Chapter 5, by analyzing Z.E.P.'s song 'La gueule du patrimoine', which inserts listeners' exaggerated reactions to their song into the song itself. In so doing, the artists ask whether speaking out about racism and discrimination nevertheless affirms that these are the only narratives open to France's racial and ethnic minority artists.

62 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 99.

63 Achille Mbembe, for instance, reminds us that ‘before colonization, there was the slave trade [...]. The acceleration in migratory movements toward France is also the direct product of that long history’ (‘The Republic and Its Beast’, 50).

64 Blanchard, ‘Histoire coloniale’, 40.

65 According to Nicki Hitchcott and Dominic Thomas, what defines ‘Afropeans’ is not a larger shared ‘black’ or African diasporic history (which would include moments such as colonization or the slave trade), but rather shared experiences of marginalization within Europe. See Nicki Hitchcott and Dominic Thomas, eds., *Francophone Afropean Literatures* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

Chapter 3: Writing, Literary *Sape*, and Reading in Mabanckou’s *Black Bazar*

1 Lino Versace, interview by Katelyn Knox, 6 July, 2006.

2 David Monsoh, interview by Katelyn Knox, 10 July, 2006.

3 On the meaning of ‘maquis’ in *nouchi* and its relationship to other contexts in which the term has been used (such as during the French resistance, or in armed anti-colonial struggles), see Noël Kouassi Ayewa, ‘Mots et contextes en FPI et en Nouchi’, paper presented at *Actes du 7es Journées scientifiques AUF-LTT* (2005).

4 Dominic Kohlhagen, ‘Frime, escroquerie et cosmopolitisme: Le succès du “coupé-décalé” en Afrique et ailleurs’, *Politique africaine*, no. 100 (2005), 92.

5 Magic System, *Un Gaou à Paris* (Paris: EMI, 2003), CD.

6 As A’salfo describes in an interview with Schadé Adédé, his primary objection to *coupé-décalé* was to the images of opulence and the practice of ‘travaillement’, or conspicuously showering individuals with bills. See Schadé Adédé, ‘A’Salfo (lead vocal de Magic System)—“Douk Saga est parti avec une bibliothèque”’, *Notre Voie*, accessed 15 September 2015, <http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200610250808.html>.

7 For excellent studies on *nouchi*, see Sasha Newell, ‘Enregistering Modernity, Bluffing Criminality: How Nouchi Speech Reinvented (and Fractured) the Nation’, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 19, no. 2 (2009); Hannah Sande, ‘Nouchi as a Distinct Language: The Morphological Evidence’, in *Selected Proceedings of the 44th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, ed. Ruth Kramer, Elizabeth C. Zsiga, and One Tlale Boyer (Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project, 2015).

8 Yacouba Konate, ‘Génération zouglou’, *Cahiers d’études africaines* 168 (2002), 783.

9 One also notes a similar gesture in Caribbean dances, which rehearses the act of cutting sugar cane.

10 For more information on *atalakus* in the Congolese *soukous* context, see

Bob White's background on this practice in 'Modernity's Trickster: "Dipping" and "Throwing" in Congolese Popular Dance Music', *Research in African Literatures* 30, no. 4 (2005). This practice also recalls the historical role of the *griot* in West Africa, as well as contemporary criticisms that many *griots* now only sing for economic advancement, rather than fulfilling their cultural role. See, for instance, Christopher Miller's analysis of the *griot* figure in Camara Laye's *L'Enfant noir* in *Theories of Africans* or Dorothea Schulz's 'Praise without Enchantment: Griots, Broadcast Media, and the Politics of Tradition in Mali', *Africa Today* 44, no. 4 (October–December 1997).

11 Honoré Essoh, 'Le "couper-décaler": phénomène musical ou danse d'escrocs?', *Rezolvoire*, accessed 15 September 2015, <http://www.africahit.com/news/index.php?mod=article&cat=Ivorycoast&article=22>.

12 Alain Mabanckou, 'Propos coupés-décalés d'un Nègre presque ordinaire', *Télérama* 2958 (2006).

13 Note: all translations for *Black Bazaar* are from the published English translation, *Black Bazaar* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2012).

14 Muriel Barbery et al., 'Pour une littérature-monde en français', *Le Monde* (16 March 2007); Michel Le Bris, Jean Rouaud, and Eva Almassy, eds., *Pour une littérature-monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007). Despite its origins as an alternative to the problematic category of *francophonie*, 'littérature-monde en français' has also generated heated controversy among critics. See especially Alec G. Hargreaves, Charles Forsdick, and David Murphy, eds., *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-monde* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012); Charles Forsdick, 'From "littérature voyageuse" to "littérature-monde": The Manifesto in Context', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 14, no. 1 (2010); Jacqueline Dutton, 'Littérature-monde or Francophonie? From the Manifesto to the Great Debate', *Essays in French Literature and Culture* 45 (2008).

15 Since 2010, these categories no longer feature prominently on FNAC's website; however, they are nevertheless still palpable in physical bookstores.

16 Alain Mabanckou, "'The Song of the Migrating Bird": For a World Literature in French', [Le chant de l'oiseau migrateur.] *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 45, no. 2 (2008), 147.

17 Éloïse Brezault, 'Du malaise de la "condition noire" dans la société française: Une identité composite en mal d'intégration dans quelques romans africains contemporains', *Nouvelles Études Francophones* 26, no. 2 (2011), 150.

18 Léonora Miano, *Habiter la Frontière* (Paris: L'Arche, 2012), 73.

19 Raoult qtd. in Dominic Thomas, *Africa and France: Postcolonial Cultures, Migration, and Racism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 149; emphasis by Thomas.

20 Thomas, *Africa and France*, 149.

21 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes*

Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (London: Routledge, 1989).

22 Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

23 Odile Cazenave and Patricia Célérier, *Contemporary Francophone African Writers and the Burden of Commitment* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 24.

24 Mongo Beti, 'L'Affaire Calixthe Beyala, ou, comment sortir du néocolonialisme en littérature', *Palabres: Revue Culturelle Africaine* 1, no. 4 (1997).

25 For an extremely thorough study of the way the French and African publishing industries shaped notions of African authorship in the early twentieth century, see Ruth Bush's *Publishing Africa in French: Literary Institutions and Decolonization* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).

26 See Raoul Nkuitchou Nkouatchet, 'Alain Mabanckou écrit-il pour les blancs?', *Slate Afrique* (4 April 2012), accessed 4 February 2014, <http://www.slateafrique.com/85007/la-fatigue-d%E2%80%99alain-mabanckou>. It is worth pointing out that such anxieties are not limited to the literary or cultural realm; for instance, Paulin Hountondji asserts that funding networks and the high level of consumption of scholarly works in the West means that African social scientists regularly exoticize their own culture in order to succeed in the scholarly community. If, he argues, African researchers began to examine their society with 'African' eyes, they would no longer feel the need to 'exalt their own cultural particularities' that differentiate them from the West (*Endogenous Knowledge: Research Trails*. [Dakar: CODESRIA, 1997], 68).

27 For the most well-known example, see Mongo Beti's article 'Afrique noire, littérature rose' *Présence africaine* 1, no. 5 (1955). Both Adele King and Christopher Miller offer useful and comprehensive overviews of the critical landscape surrounding *L'Enfant noir* (see King, *Rereading Camara Laye* [Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002], 48–53; Miller, *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa* [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990], 121–26). Miller's analysis also offers a much more nuanced reading of Laye's novel.

28 See my discussion of *sape* in the introduction to Chapter 2.

29 See especially Dominic Thomas, *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007); Ch. Didier Gondola, 'Dream and Drama: The Search for Elegance among Congolese Youth', *African Studies Review* 42, no. 1 (1999); Justin-Daniel Gandoulou, *Entre Paris et Baongo* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, Centre de création industrielle, 1984); Jonathan Friedman, 'The Political Economy of Elegance: An African Cult of Beauty', in *Consumption and Identity*, ed. Jonathan Friedman (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994).

30 In fact, Dominic Thomas concludes that this is what makes *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003) such an important work: even though Madické initially

views Salie as a *paysanne* (without actually using that language), he eventually heeds her warnings and decides *not* to migrate to France. This act valorizes the breaking of the cycle of immigration and of Francocentrism—the recognition that success is possible at home. See Thomas, *Black France*, 203–04.

31 Pascale De Souza, ‘Trickster Strategies in Alain Mabanckou’s *Black Bazar*’, *Research in African Literatures* 42, no. 1 (2011), 110.

32 Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 2001), xi.

33 As Abiola Irele has illustrated, much literary criticism devoted to *L’Enfant noir*, particularly Adele King’s *Rereading Camara Laye*, has contested the ‘authenticity’ of both its author and its content. For Irele, these accusations of inauthenticity reveal problematic assumptions regarding African literature: ‘should an African novel be no more than an ethnographic document that is required to be true to life in every detail? And was Laye thus constrained to an exclusive reproduction of his indigenous culture?’ (‘In Search of Camara Laye’, *Research in African Literatures* 37, no. 1 [2006], 118).

34 Laye’s is hardly the only case demonstrating the compulsion to ‘place’ African (or African diasporic) authors that dominates literary and cultural criticism; in fact, one hears echoes of perhaps one of the most contentious francophone authors living and publishing in France today: Calixthe Beyala. The Cameroonian author actively cultivates her media persona as both ‘authentic’ and fake to exploit, as Nicki Hitchcott has put it, ‘France’s neocolonial fear of—and desire for—the exotic’ (‘Calixthe Beyala: Prizes, Plagiarism, and “Authenticity”’, *Research in African Literatures* 37, no. 1 [2006], 103).

35 De Souza, ‘Trickster Strategies in Alain Mabanckou’s *Black Bazar*’, 114.

36 Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 3.

37 For just two examples addressing these very questions, see Irele’s preface to the 2000 edition of Césaire’s *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, and Watts’s *Packaging Post/Coloniality*.

38 Thomas, *Africa and France*, 78–79.

39 As I mentioned in this chapter’s introduction, an earlier version of what would ultimately become *Black Bazar* was also published in *Télérama* as a short story entitled ‘Propos coupés-décalsés d’un nègre presque ordinaire’ in 2006.

40 Modogo Abarambwa and Sam Tshintu, *Black Bazar* (Paris: Lusafrica Records, 2012), CD.

41 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press 2008), 96–97.

42 John Walsh, ‘Sarkozy, Mabanckou, and Notes from the Bar: Alain Mabanckou’s *Verre cassé*’, *The French Review* 84, no. 1 (2010), 132.

Chapter 4: Looking Back on Afropea's Origins:
Léonora Miano's *Blues pour Élise* as an Afropean Mediascape

1 bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 118.

2 See Fanon's discussion of magazines and history books (*Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox [New York: Grove Press 2008], 127) or Hall's analysis in 'Racist Ideologies and The Media', in *Media Studies: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

3 Peggy McIntosh, 'White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack', *Peace and Freedom Magazine* (July–August 1989), 10.

4 Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', *Theory, Culture and Society* 7, no. 2–3 (1990), 299.

5 Léonora Miano, *Habiter la Frontière* (Paris: L'Arche, 2012), 71–72; emphasis added.

6 Note: all translations in this chapter are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

7 Of course, this film about a ghostwriter, called a *nègre (littéraire)* in French, opens up wider discussions of racial identities.

8 Miano, *Habiter la Frontière*, 72.

9 Nicki Hitchcott and Dominic Thomas, 'Introduction: Francophone Afropeans', in *Francophone Afropean Literatures*, ed. Nicki Hitchcott and Dominic Thomas (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014). The notion of 'Afropean' communities grows out of a much larger discussion of 'Black European' and 'Afro-European' communities. See Allison Blakely, 'The Emergence of Afro-Europe: A Preliminary Sketch', in *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine, Trica Danielle Keaton, and Stephen Small (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Sabrina Brancato, 'Afro-European Literatures: A New Discursive Strategy?', *Research in African Literatures* 39, no. 3 (2008).

10 See Wilfried N'Sondé, *Berlinoise* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2015); *Le Silence des esprits* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2010); *Le Cœur des enfants léopards* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2007); Bessora, *53 cm* (Paris: Le Serpent à Plumes, 1999); *Les Taches d'encre* (Paris: Le Serpent à Plumes, 2000); *Cueillez-moi jolis messieurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007); Sami Tchak, *Places des fêtes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001); Fatou Diome, *La Préférence nationale, et autres nouvelles* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 2005). I must point out, too, that Alain Mabanckou's *Black Bazar* (2009), studied in Chapter 3, is often classified as an 'Afropean' work. In my view, it straddles the boundary between a work depicting 'Black France'—of which one part is necessarily European—and 'Afropea', principally because its main protagonist, Fessologue, is not Afropean. Even if he shows no desire to return, he nevertheless migrated from Central Africa to France in young adulthood.

11 Léonora Miano, *Blues pour Élise* (Paris: Plon, 2010). Note: all citations to *Blues* for the remainder of the chapter will be given as parentheses.

12 This structure is confirmed by an interview in which Miano explained that she hoped that it could one day be shown on French television (Camille Thomine, ‘Léonora Miano: “Il faut formuler le concept d’afropéanisme”’, *Le Magazine Littéraire* (22 December 2010), <http://www.magazine-litteraire.com/actualite/leonora-miano-il-faut-formuler-concept-afropeanisme-06-11-2013-33069>).

13 A select list of notable exceptions include more informative and documentary-style programs such as *Mosaïques* (France 3, 1977–87), *Opération Télécity* (France 3 Paris and France 3 Lille, 1999–2003), *Saga cités* (FR3/France 3, 1991–2002), and *Semaines de l’intégration* (France 3, 2003–05), as well as dramas and sitcoms such as *Sixième gauche* (FR3, 1990), *La Famille Ramdam* (M6, 1990–91), *Fruits et légumes* (FR3, 1994), *Seconde B* (F2, 1993–94), and *C’est cool!* (F2, 1996). For a comprehensive analysis of the history of minorities on French television (in both fiction series and other nonfiction arenas) see Alec G. Hargreaves, ‘Gatekeepers and Gateways: Post-Colonial Minorities and French Television’, in *Post-Colonial Cultures in France*, ed. Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney (New York: Routledge, 1997). Hargreaves also offers a thorough analysis of the series *La Famille Ramdam* in ‘La Famille Ramdan: un “sit-com” pur beur’, *Hommes & Migrations* 1147 (1991). For insightful analyses of the relationship between minority spectatorship in the British context, see Karen Ross, ‘White Media, Black Audience: Diversity and Dissonance’, in *Black Marks: Minority Ethnic Audiences and Media*, ed. Karen Ross (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001).

14 See page 65 of the Haut Conseil à l’Intégration’s (HCI) three-year report, entitled ‘Diversité Culturelle et culture commune dans l’audiovisuel’, accessible at <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/var/storage/rapports-publics/064000272.pdf>.

15 Haut Conseil à l’Intégration, *Rapport 2002–2005*, 92. The law has since been modified; its most recent version can be found at <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000435897&categorieLien=id>.

16 Haut Conseil à l’Intégration, *Rapport 2002–2005*, 65.

17 Mémona Hintermann, interview by Mikaël Guedj, 2013. One of the ways Hintermann proposed to combat this was to ask each French station to develop its own ‘diversity’ commercial and air it during the weekend of July 13–14, 2013 to coincide with France’s national holiday.

18 *Écrans pâles? Diversité culturelle et culture commune dans l’audiovisuel: Actes du colloque du 26 avril 2004* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2004).

19 Haut Conseil à l’Intégration, *Rapport 2002–2005*, 75.

20 Haut Conseil à l’Intégration, *Rapport 2002–2005*, 75. Of course, an enormous corpus of literature in a variety of fields has demonstrated that these assumptions (that there are only two biological sexes, that biological

sex is universal, and that gender identity and expression neatly correlate to biological sex) are incorrect. For but some of the most canonical and most recent work on this subject, see Mimi Marinucci's *Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection between Queer and Feminist Theory* (New York: Zed Books, 2010) for a thorough overview of how sex, gender, and sexuality are often wrongfully collapsed, and how these collapses are justified, as well as an excellent glossary of terms related to sex, gender, and sexuality; Elizabeth Grosz's *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), which approaches the implications of science and materialism for our understanding of biology and sex; Anne Fausto-Sterling's books *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000) and *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), which challenge the research that establishes the sex binary as primary and examines how intersexed persons complicate the theory; and Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993), which examines the discursive and performative dimensions of gender. I thank Taine Duncan for introducing me to such a vast array of important works on the topic.

21 Françoise Vergès usefully analyzes the underlying implications of terms (such as 'amnesia', 'occlusion', and 'selective memory') often associated with describing the historical lacunae surrounding the slave trade in contemporary France. See her 'Les Troubles de la mémoire: traite négrière, esclavage et écriture de l'histoire', *Cahiers d'études africaines* 179–80, no. 3 (2005): 1150–55.

22 Zap Mama, *Ancestry in Progress* (New York: Luka Bop Records, 2004), CD.

23 Zap Mama, *Adventures in Afropea 1* (New York: Luaka Bop Records, 1993), CD.

24 See, for instance, Tyler Edward Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); Tyler Stovall, 'No Green Pastures: The African Americanization of France', in *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine, Trica Danielle Keaton, and Stephen Small (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Bennetta Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris: The African Writers' Landscape* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Anne Donadey, 'African American and Francophone Postcolonial Memory: Octavia Butler's *Kindred* and Assia Djebar's *La femme sans sépulture*', *Research in African Literatures* 39, no. 3 (2008).

25 Stovall, *Paris Noir*.

26 Anne Donadey, 'Anamnesis and National Reconciliation: Re-membering October 17, 1961', in *Immigrant Narratives in Contemporary France*, ed. Susan Ireland and Patrice J. Proulx (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001).

27 Neoconservative politician, writer, and Académie française member Max Gallo has even argued against revisiting colonial history at all. In his view, doing so inevitably initiates a self-reinforcing cycle that undermines the

very fabric of the Republic by reigniting ‘les frustrations, les humiliations, et les haines. On traîne la France au banc des accusés’ (the frustrations, humiliation, hatreds. We drag France to the dock). See Gallo, ‘Colonisation: la tentation de la pénitence’, *Le Figaro* (30 November 2005).

28 For but one example, see my discussion of the controversy surrounding the 2005 *Loi du 23 février* whose fourth article (now repealed) required French history books to discuss the ‘positive effects’ of colonization in this book’s introduction.

29 Ousmane Sembene, *Ceddo* (New York: New Yorker Films, 2001), VHS; Yambo Ouologuem, *Le Devoir de violence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968). For a more extensive treatment of the topic of African silence regarding the slave trade, as well as cultural works exploring both the topic and its forgetting in Africa, see the chapter ‘African Silence’ in Christopher L. Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

30 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 90.

31 An Akan word meaning, ‘reach back and get it’, Sankofa is often represented as a bird that reaches back to pick up an egg resting on its back. That Miano subtitled one of her earlier novels ‘Sankofa cry’ already indicates that the concept plays a central role for her.

32 Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 152. Sambo is also a character mentioned in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Helen Bannerman’s *Little Black Sambo*, a story originally published in 1899 about a young boy in India.

33 *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*, 152. For more on Sambo’s representation in American popular culture, see Sylvia Wynter, ‘Sambos and Minstrels’, *Social Text* 1 (1979).

34 Auslander and Holt, ‘Sambo in Paris: Race and Racism in the Iconography of the Everyday’.

35 Miano, *Habiter la frontière*, 30.

36 *Habiter la frontière*, 29.

37 As Miano has explained, African American cultural works find a particularly prominent place in her writing because they played a central role in ushering in her own ‘black consciousness’, which she terms ‘l’être noir’ (‘black being’): ‘j’ai compris que je faisais, moi aussi, partie de ces peuples auxquels une place au monde avait été assigné en fonction de leur complexion’ (I understood that I, too, belonged to those people whose place in the world had been assigned based on their complexion) (*Habiter la Frontière*, 29).

38 Miano, *Habiter la Frontière*, 12–15.

39 Catherine Mazauric, ‘Débords musicaux du texte: Vers des pratiques transartistiques de la désappartenance (Léonora Miano, Dieudonné Niangouna)’, *Nouvelles Études Francophones* 27, no. 1 (2012): 108.

40 Nicki Hitchcott, 'Sex and the Afropean City: Léonora Miano's *Blues pour Élise*', in *Francophone Afropean Literatures*, ed. Nicki Hitchcott and Dominic Thomas (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

41 Miano, *Blues pour Élise*, 201.

42 Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', 302.

43 For a particularly thorough discussion of the differences between diasporic and exiled populations, see Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton University Press, 2001).

44 Miano, *Habiter la frontière*, 86, emphasis added.

45 Olivier Cachin, 'Baloji: Rappeur entre deux mondes', *RFI.com* (5 February 2008), accessed 24 February 2015, http://www.rfimusique.com/musiquefr/articles/098/article_17149.asp.

46 'A la rencontre de Bams, artiste rap, jazz et soul camerounaise', *Bonaberi.com* (2 June 2010), accessed 24 February 2015, http://www.bonaberi.com/ar,a_la_rencontre_de_bams_artiste_rap_jazz_et_soul_camerounaise,7810.html. Though she publicly identifies herself with her ethnicity, Bamiléke, over any nationality (French, Cameroonian, or a mixture of the two), her birth in France, as well as her Cameroonian heritage is always evoked in articles about her, as Yasmine Chouaki's entry on RFI's website illustrates: 'Bams est une chanteuse de hip-hop originaire du Cameroun et née en France en 1973' (Bams is a hip-hop singer of Cameroonian background, born in France in 1973).

47 As Timothy Taylor, among others, suggests, African American music such as jazz has often been taken as a marker of modernity or of a type of reactionary musical discourse, rather than necessarily evoking the geographical location of the United States (*Beyond Exoticism*, 155).

48 This is how her biography presents her on her MySpace page (<http://www.myspace.com/valeryboston>), my emphasis.

49 In the 'Ambiance Sonore', 'Annick' is spelled 'Anick' (49).

50 Miano, *Blues pour Élise*, back cover; emphasis in original.

51 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 96–97; emphasis added.

52 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 96.

Chapter 5: Anti-White Racism without Races:

French Rap, Whiteness, and Disciplinary Institutionalized Spectacularism

1 Notable recent examples include Pascal Blanchard et al., eds., *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014); Trica Danielle Keaton, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Tyler Stovall, eds., *Black France/France Noire: The History and Politics of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Pascal Blanchard et al., *La France noire: Trois siècles de présences des Afriques, des Caraïbes, de l'Océan Indien et d'Océanie* (Paris: Découverte, 2011); Pap Ndiaye, *La Condition noire: essai*

sur une minorité française (Paris: Editions Calmann-Lévy, 2008); Dominic Thomas, *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007).

2 Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), 1.

3 Dyer, *White*, 4; George Yancy, *Look, a White! Philosophical Essays on Whiteness* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2012), 7.

4 Yancy, *Look, a White!*, 7.

5 Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère, eds., *De Quelle Couleur sont les Blancs? Des 'petits Blancs' des colonies au 'racisme anti-Blancs'* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013). On the need for a critical inquiry into 'whiteness' in France and an interrogation of its normative association with national identity, see especially Carole Reynaud-Pallgot, 'La Construction de l'identité nationale et raciale en France aux XIXe et XXe siècles', in *De Quelle Couleur sont les Blancs? Des 'petits Blancs' des colonies au 'racisme anti-Blancs'*, ed. Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère (Paris: La Découverte, 2013); Françoise Vergès, 'La "ligne de couleur": esclavage et racisme colonial et postcolonial', in *De Quelle Couleur sont les Blancs? Des 'petits Blancs' des colonies au 'racisme anti-Blancs'*, ed. Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère (Paris: La Découverte, 2013); Sylvie Laurent, 'Pourquoi s'interroger sur les Blancs? De l'utilité des *whiteness studies*', in *De Quelle Couleur sont les Blancs? Des 'petits Blancs' des colonies au 'racisme anti-Blancs'*, ed. Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère (Paris: La Découverte, 2013); Pascal Blanchard and Gilles Boëtsch, 'La Construction du "Blanc" dans l'iconographie coloniale', in *De Quelle Couleur sont les Blancs? Des 'petits Blancs' des colonies au 'racisme anti-Blancs'*, ed. Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère (Paris: La Découverte, 2013).

6 Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xxviii.

7 Trica Danielle Keaton, 'The Politics of Race-Blindness: (Anti)Blackness and Category-Blindness in Contemporary France', *Du Bois Review* 7, no. 1 (2010), 105.

8 Keaton, 'The Politics of Race-Blindness', 105.

9 David Theo Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (Malden, WA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 187.

10 Vergès, 'La "ligne de couleur"', 79.

11 Jean-Loup Amselle, *Affirmative Exclusion: Cultural Pluralism and the Rule of Custom in France*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 5.

12 Alec G. Hargreaves, *Multi-Ethnic France: Immigration, Politics, Culture and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1.

13 See the more extensive discussion of these laws in Chapter 2.

14 Naomi Zack, *Race and Mixed Race* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993), 9.

15 Zack, *Race and Mixed Race*, 9; my emphasis.

16 See especially El-Tayeb, *European Others*; Hargreaves, *Multi-Ethnic France*.

17 Anne McClintock, 'Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family', *Feminist Review* 44 (1993), 63; emphasis in original.

18 The law's text can be found at <http://www.senat.fr/leg/tas07-011.html>.

19 Éric Fassin, for instance, writes, 'On the one hand, DNA testing was strictly controlled in France: the special treatment of immigrants could thus be considered as a form of discrimination. On the other hand, the amendment implied a redefinition of the family in biological terms. In other words, both arguments had to do with the racialization of immigration, as well as the nation' ('Entre Famille et nation: la filiation naturalisée', *Droit et société* 72, no. 2 [2009], 523). Dominic Thomas echoes this sentiment: 'Defining newcomers to France differently from their French counterparts has instead served to support prevalent assumptions that visible minorities and immigrants belong to a distinct social configuration, outside the dominant order of things' (*Africa and France: Postcolonial Cultures, Migration, and Racism* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013], 68).

20 Fassin, 'Entre famille et nation', 379.

21 'Guéant persiste et signe: "Toutes les civilisations ne se valent pas"', *Le Point* (5 February 2012), accessed 1 May 2014, http://www.lepoint.fr/politique/hierarchie-des-civilisations-claude-gueant-persiste-et-signé-05-02-2012-1427704_20.php.

22 Dyer, *White*, 1.

23 For a thorough discussion of what is—and is not—permitted in terms of discussing 'ethnicity' in France, see Alec G. Hargreaves, 'Veiled Truths: Discourses of Ethnicity in Contemporary France', in *Ethnic Europe: Mobility, Identity and Conflict in a Globalized World*, ed. Roland Hsu (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010). Of course, as I discussed at length in this book's introduction, race is not 'named' explicitly, and racial and ethnic minorities are not 'seen' through official ethnic statistics, which remain illegal in France. See, for instance, Erik Bleich, 'Antiracism without Races: Politics and Policy in a "Color-Blind" State', *French Politics, Culture, & Society* 18, no. 3 (2000); Patrick Simon, 'The Choice of Ignorance: The Debate on Ethnic and Racial Statistics in France', *French Politics, Culture & Society* 26, no. 1 (2008).

24 Charles Trenet, 'Douce France' / 'En écoutant mon cœur chanter' (Columbia, 1947), 78 rpm single; Les Enfants du Pays, 'Douce France' (2007), accessed 20 May 2014, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xy4mo_les-enfants-du-pays-douce-france_music.

25 Curiously, though conceived to help disadvantaged young people gain access to professional training, the proceeds from selling this single went to the French football federation's Fraternité Insertion Football fund.

26 Salif Keïta and L'Skadrille, *Nou Pas Bouger* (Universal, 2007), CD.

27 Keïta and L'Skadrille, *Nou Pas Bouger*.

28 Keïta and L'Skadrille, *Nou Pas Bouger*.

29 Keïta and L'Skadrille, *Nou Pas Bouger*.

30 Keïta and L'Skadrille, *Nou Pas Bouger*.

31 For instance, Nick Nesbitt affirms that 'this black Atlantic vernacular [of] modernism arose from and protests against society while steadfastly maintaining the concrete musical image of a utopian intersubjective social experience' ('African Music, Ideology and Utopia', *Research in African Literatures* 32, no. 2 [Summer 2001], 184).

32 See for example George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (London: Verso, 1994); Tony Mitchell, ed., *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001); S. Craig Watkins, *Hip Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2005); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); James G. Spady, Samir Meghelli, and H. Samy Alim, *The Global Cippa: Hip Hop Culture and Consciousness* (Philadelphia, PA: Black History Museum Press, 2006).

33 See for example El-Tayeb, *European Others*; Adam Krims, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Alain-Philippe Durand, ed., *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in the Francophone World* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002).

34 Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads*, 36.

35 Keïta and L'Skadrille, 'Nou Pas Bouger', 2007, accessed 1 May 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPFogbxwC3c>.

36 In fact, as Pascal Blanchard notes, at human exhibitions 'the "savage" body was staged in such a way that it was eroticized, displayed naked or semi-naked, and made to move in "ritual dances" in a way which escaped the canons of Western movement' ('Human Zoos: The Greatest Exotic Shows in the West: Introduction', translated by Teresa Bridgeman. In *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, edited by Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, Gilles Boëtsch, Éric Deroo, Sandrine Lemaire, and Charles Forsdick [Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008], 20). Similarly, the dancer's male body here calls to mind the predominance of male objects of the French gaze in the children's comic books and musical works I discuss in Chapter 1.

37 The group's name comes from the acronym for 'Zone of Popular Expression', but it is also a play on the French phrase 'Zone d'éducation prioritaire' or Priority Education Zone—areas designated as requiring additional resources to combat students' historical underperformance.

38 Though *banlieue* is often translated as 'suburb', this refers to its

geographic positioning outside of a main metropolitan center. French *banlieues* are often imagined as hotbeds of unrest and socioeconomically marginalized zones.

39 The name plays with the two connotations of the word *indigènes* (natives). During French imperialism, *indigènes*, under France's Code de l'indigénat (Code of the Indiginate) were not afforded the same legal status as French citizens. The activist group's name therefore draws connections between this inferior legal status and how France's racial and ethnic minority populations are treated in contemporary France. Though they are 'natives of France', they are nevertheless treated in the same way as their forebears were under colonial rule (as 'natives' and therefore not entitled to the same rights as French citizens).

40 The Parti des Indigènes de la République's members have outlined their visions of French society in publications such as Sadri Khiari, *Pour une politique de la racaille: immigré-e-s, indigènes et jeunes de banlieues*, Discorde (Paris: Textuel, 2006); Houria Bouteldja, Sadri Khiari, and Félix Boggio Évanjé-Épée, *Nous sommes les indigènes de la République* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2012).

41 Annie Lacroix-Riz, 'Entretien avec Z.E.P.: "Ma musique est une musique de lutte"', *Investig'Action* (14 April 2011), accessed 1 May 2014, <http://www.michelcollon.info/Entretien-avec-Z-E-P-Ma-musique.html?lang=fr>.

42 The website, no longer operational, published individuals' responses to the question 'What does it mean to be French today?' Some of the responses attempted to delineate definitive criteria (based on family history), such as having family roots in France over a certain number of generations. Other responses, especially those that received the most comments, however, proposed more inclusive visions of Frenchness. Select contributions (and the resulting discussions) originally available at <http://contributions.debatidentitenationale.fr/> are accessible through the Internet web archive (the 'Internet Wayback Machine').

43 Saïd Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence* (Paris: Darna, 2010), n.p.

44 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

45 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

46 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

47 This move also places Z.E.P.'s album in dialog with other popular music works such as M. C. Solaar's 'La concubine de l'hémoglobine' which, as Mireille Rosello shows, rewrites Rimbaud's *Le Dormeur du val* or, as I have discussed elsewhere, Médine's '17 octobre', which references canonical symbols of French culture (such as Joan of Arc or Monet's *Les Nymphéas*) to reinscribe Algerian immigrants into French history. See Mireille Rosello, 'Rap Music and French Cultural Studies: For an Ethics of the Ephemeral', in *French Cultural Studies: Criticism at the Crossroads*, ed. Marie-Pierre Le Hir and Dana Strand

(Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000); Katelyn E. Knox, 'Rapping Postmemory, Sampling the Archive: Reimagining 17 October 1961', *Modern & Contemporary France* 22, no. 3 (2014).

48 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

49 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

50 Here, I am drawing from Philomena Essed's formulation of 'everyday racism' articulated in *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991).

51 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

52 Such a claim has also been made by Cameroonian novelist Léonora Miano who, as discussed in Chapter 4, points to the casting of white French actor Gérard Dépardieu as Alexandre Dumas—glossing over the writer's complex racial heritage (*Habiter la Frontière*, 72). Similarly, for Lilian Thuram, former soccer player and current director of the Thuram Foundation, the whitening of French (and world) history means that few black historical figures are accessible to children—a gap he has sought to fill by publishing a book celebrating forty-three figures of African descent from around the world entitled *Mes Étoiles noires: de Lucy à Barack Obama*.

53 This law later became known as the loi Besson-Hortefeux-Guéant, and was adopted on June 16, 2011. It principally modifies laws governing the treatment of 'portable' foreigners by increasing the maximum detention limit, restricting access to French asylum juridical outlets, and creating additional detention zones ('Zones d'attente pour des personnes en instance'). For the full text of the law, see <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/les-decisions/acces-par-date/decisions-depuis-1959/2011/2011-631-dc/decision-n-2011-631-dc-du-09-juin-2011.97377.html>.

54 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

55 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

56 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

57 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

58 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

59 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

60 Bouamama and Z.E.P., *Devoir d'Insolence*.

61 Z.E.P., 'Nique la France' (2010), accessed 1 May 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdA2j40U7v8>.

62 Z.E.P., 'Nique la France'.

63 Gabriele Griffin and Rosi Braidotti, 'Whiteness and European Situatedness', in *Thinking Differently: A Reader in European Women's Studies*, ed. Gabriele Griffin and Rosi Braidotti (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 223. Though Griffin and Braidotti's analysis of this gaze emerges from the field of feminist scholarship, they nevertheless demonstrate how it carries over into the field of whiteness studies.

64 For a particularly insightful analysis of the potential limitations of

escaping such gazing dynamics, see E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 293–98.

65 Here one thinks, too, of scholarly debate around the type of look colonial photographs and postcards invite, discussed in this book's introduction and in Chapter 1.

66 Here, I am again drawing on Laura Mulvey's foundational essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in which she proposes that white female subjects were often depicted as 'lacking' in order to affirm white male subjectivity and legitimate the white male gaze ('Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16, no. 3 [1975], 121). See also my discussion of the gendered dynamics of the Female gaze on Nénufar and on Négrette in Chapter 1.

67 bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 121. See also the discussion of the 'oppositional gaze' in this book's introduction and first chapter.

68 This act also recalls accusations of 'reverse racism' in the United States.

69 Bleich offers a particularly nuanced reading of France's two major antidiscrimination laws—the law of 1972 and the Gayssot law of 1990 in 'Antiracism without Races'.

70 'Antiracism without Races', 58.

71 Pierre-André Taguieff, 'Réflexions sur la question antiraciste', *Mots* 18 (1989), 79.

72 Finkelkraut later published *L'Identité malheureuse* (2013) and was elected to the Académie française in 2014, where he occupies chair 21. The Indigènes de la République party vehemently opposed his election to this position, particularly because of Finkelkraut's right-wing politics, pointing out, 'Il est désormais chargé de veiller sur la culture française; on verra l'idée qu'il en a' (He is responsible for keeping watch over French culture now; we'll see what his idea of it is) (qtd. in Ajari). Finkelkraut has been at the center of many media controversies: his article critiquing the *vivre-ensemble* mentality, for instance, formed the basis for a special issue of the magazine *Causeur*. See Alain Finkelkraut, 'Malaise dans l'identité: quatrième leçon sur le vivre-ensemble', *Causeur* (November 2014).

73 For a particularly inflammatory article on the confrontation that ultimately led to Finkelkraut, Julliard, and Kouchner's outcry, see Luc Bronner, 'Manifestations des lycéens: le spectre des violences anti-Blancs', *Le Monde* (15 March 2005), accessed 1 May 2014, http://www.lemonde.fr/a-la-une/article/2005/03/15/manifestations-de-lyceens-le-spectre-des-violences-anti-blancs_401648_3208.html.

74 The text is no longer available from the organizations themselves, but has been reproduced multiple times electronically. See 'Racisme "anti-blancs": un appel contesté', *Nouvel Observateur* (2 April 2005), accessed 1 May 2014, <http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/societe/20050325.OBS2251/racisme-anti-blancs-un-appel-conteste.html>.

75 ‘Racisme “anti-blancs”: un appel contesté’. For other analyses of the text, see also Damien Charrieras, ‘Racisme(s)? Retour sur la polémique du “racisme anti-Blancs” en France’, in *De Quelle Couleur sont les Blancs? Des ‘petits Blancs’ des colonies au ‘racisme anti-Blancs’*, ed. Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère (Paris: La Découverte, 2013); Vergès, ‘La “ligne de couleur”’.

76 Éric Fassin, too, points out the dangers of this association: ‘Bref, l’appel [de Hachomer Hatzair et Radio Shalom] ne renforcerait-il pas l’idée que les Blancs sont les Français et les Français, blancs?’ (In short, might not the call [issued by Hachomer Hatzair and Radio Shalom] reinforce the idea that whites are French and that French people are white?) (‘Aveugles à la race ou au racisme? Une approche stratégique’, in *De la Question sociale à la question raciale? Représenter la société française*, edited by Didier Fassin and Éric Fassin [Paris: Découverte, 2006], 131).

77 The petition’s central target was Monsieur R’s song ‘FranSSe’ from his album *Politikment incorrekt* (2005). Other artists named include Smala, Fabe and Salif, and bands Ministère A.M.E.R., 113, and Lunatic.

78 The group was charged with disrespecting public officers (‘outrages à personnes dépositaires de l’autorité publique dans l’exercice de leurs fonctions’ [abuses of those holding public authority while they are carrying out their duties]). France’s Interior Minister brought a suit against the group Ministère A.M.E.R. the following year. See Rosello, ‘Rap Music and French Cultural Studies’, 86–87. See also Charles Tshimanga, ‘Let the Music Play: The African Diaspora, Popular Culture, and National Identity in Contemporary France’, in *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France*, ed. Charles Tshimanga, Ch. Didier Gondola, and Peter J. Bloom (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009).

79 Karim Hammou, ‘Y a-t-il une “question blanche” dans le rap français?’, in *De Quelle Couleur sont les Blancs? Des ‘petits Blancs’ des colonies au ‘racisme anti-Blancs’*, ed. Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), 192.

80 ‘Quatre ans requis contre l’auteur présumé d’une agression raciste “anti-blanc”’, *Le Monde* (26 April 2013), accessed 1 May 2014, http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2013/04/26/un-proces-pour-racisme-anti-blanc-s-ouvre-a-paris_3167184_3224.html.

81 MRAP (Le Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples), ‘Projet d’orientation MRAP 2012: un MRAP mobilisé face aux enjeux d’aujourd’hui’ (2012), accessed 1 May 2014, <http://www.mrap.fr/documents-1/projet-orientation-2012.pdf>.

82 Michel Agier et al., “‘Racisme antiblanc’: le texte du MRAP “préoccupant””, *Rue 89, Le Nouvel Observateur* (15 June 2012), accessed 1 May 2014, <http://www.rue89.com/2012/06/15/racisme-anti-blanc-le-texte-de-la-mrap-preoccupant-232670>.

83 Jean-François Copé, *Manifeste pour une droite décomplexée* (Paris: Fayard, 2012).

84 Copé, *Manifeste pour une droite décomplexée*.

85 Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 167–73.

86 Initial reports that Copé had beaten incumbent François Fillon by a narrow margin (50.3% to 49.7%) led the latter to contest the results. After further review, an election board confirmed the initial outcome (announcing that Copé had won 50.8% of the votes) and a later vote confirmed that Copé would serve out his entire three-year term.

87 Bernard Antony, ‘Nique la France: la plainte de l’AGRIF enregistrée par le doyen des juges l’instruction de Paris’ (28 February 2011), accessed 5 October 2013, <http://bernard-antony.blogspot.com/2011/02/nique-la-france-la-plainte-de-lagrif.html> [emphasis added].

88 João Gabriell Galli, ‘De l’urgence d’en finir avec le “racisme anti-blanc”’, *Les Mots sont Importants* (14 November 2012), accessed 1 May 2014, <http://lmsi.net/De-l-urgence-d-en-finir-avec-le>.

Outro: Looking Back, Moving Forward

1 I thank Anne Donadey for drawing my attention to these parallels.

2 Éric Fassin, ‘La race, ça nous regarde’, *Libération* (25 July 2013), accessed 22 February 2015, http://www.liberation.fr/culture/2013/07/25/la-race-ca-nous-regarde_920834.

3 I also situate discussions of the Jardin de l’Outre-Mer within larger moves to commemorate France’s colonial history—particularly the massacre on October 17, 1961, in ‘Rapping Postmemory, Sampling the Archive: Reimagining 17 October 1961’, *Modern & Contemporary France* 22, no. 3 (2014).

4 As Bancel points out, individuals from a variety of national backgrounds were exhibited at the Jardin d’Acclimatation in 1882, 1892, 1929, and 1931 (‘Nous n’irons pas au Jardin d’Acclimatation’, *Respect Magazine* [30 March 2011], 3).

5 Notable protests came from Guyana’s deputies Chantal Berthelot and Christiane Taubira, who both wrote letters to France’s then Ministre de l’Outre-Mer (which became the Ministre des Outre-Mer in 2012), Marie-Luce Penchard, contesting the chosen venue. Over fifty different views expressed (through interviews or in written statements) by historians, writers, filmmakers, and government officials can be read in the appendices to the Mission Report at <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/var/storage/rapports-publics/114000663/0000.pdf>.

6 Bancel, ‘Nous n’irons pas au Jardin d’Acclimatation’, 3. It is also worth pointing out that the title of his critique (We Will not Go to the Jardin

d'Acclimatation) evokes that of the manifesto the Surrealists published in conjunction with their 1931 counter-exhibition ('Ne visitez pas l'Exposition' [Don't visit the (Colonial) Exhibition])

7 Bancel, 'Nous n'irons pas au Jardin d'Acclimatation', 3.

8 Two private organizations (the ACHAC research group and the Thuram Foundation) held an exhibit entitled 'L'invention du sauvage: acclimations/Exhibitions' in the Jardin d'Acclimatation children's museum one year later.

9 See Penchard's letter, reproduced in the CPMHE's final mission report entitled *Rapport de la mission sur la mémoire des expositions ethnographiques et coloniales*, available at <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/var/storage/rapports-publics/114000663/0000.pdf>.

10 CPMHE (Comité pour la mémoire et l'histoire de l'esclavage), *Rapport de la mission sur la mémoire des expositions ethnographiques et coloniales*, 1; emphasis added.

11 CPMHE, *Rapport de la mission sur la mémoire des expositions ethnographiques et coloniales*, 20.

12 On March 10, 2003, France's Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin charged former Minister of Culture Jacques Toubon with exploring the ways in which the nation could better recognize the contributions of foreigners to France and respond to historians' calls to create a museum of immigration. Raffarin concurred with a 2001 report drafted by Driss El Yazami, Vice President of the Ligue des droits de l'homme and Rémy Schwartz, the state's Master of Requests, to create a 'resource center' rather than a 'museum'. See his 'Lettre de la mission de préfiguration' available at http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/sites/default/files/musee-numerique/documents/ext_media_fichier_83_Lettre_mission.pdf.

13 Prior to 1990, the museum's name had been the Musée des arts africains et océaniens. In 2003, the collections were transferred to the Musée du Quai Branly, another space that has been the center of much critical attention. For particularly astute readings of the Quai Branly Museum, see Herman Lebovics, 'The Musée du Quai Branly: Art? Artifact? Spectacle!', *French Politics, Culture & Society* 24, no. 3 (2006); Dominic Thomas, 'The Quai Branly Museum: Political Transition, Memory and Globalisation in Contemporary France', *French Cultural Studies* 19, no. 2 (2008).

14 This exhibit is also matched on the museum's website, which houses governmental documents regarding the museum's creation and evolution on two principal webpages: 'Le projet de la cité' (The Museum's Project) (<http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/la-cite/le-projet-de-la-cite>) and 'Historique du projet' (The Project's History) (<http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/la-cite/historique-du-projet>).

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