

## Postcolonial Writing in France before and beyond the 2007 Littérature-monde Manifesto

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**Volume 18 Issue 4 (December 2016) Article 7**  
**Myriam Louviot,**  
**"Postcolonial Writing in France before and beyond**  
**the 2007 *Littérature-monde* Manifesto"**  
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Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 18.4 (2016)**  
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**Ed. Dervila Cooke**  
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**Abstract:** In her article "Postcolonial Writing in France before and beyond the 2007 *Littérature-monde* Manifesto" Myriam Louviot discusses the evolution of postcolonial writing in France. She argues that postcolonial writers often face great difficulty in achieving recognition as legitimate French authors. Louviot suggests that restrictive boundaries of categorization have started to become blurred but that it is still too early to rejoice, partly due to the continuing cultural ghettoization of many of these writers and the traditional differentiation of their work from French literature. Louviot discusses in detail the 2007 *Pour une "littérature-monde" en français* initiated by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud, which sought to address some of these imbalances. Through the examples of work by writers including Milano, Gauz, N'Sondé, and NDiaye, Louviot points out some changes and ambiguities in the reception of postcolonial writing.

**Myriam LOUVIOT**

### **Postcolonial Writing in France before and beyond the 2007 *Littérature-monde Manifesto***

Most writers with an immigrant or foreign-born background face the following paradox in France: in a country with such a long and important history of immigration and that has been built by immigrants to such a large extent, they are still confined to the margins, considered as outsiders or exceptions. The situation of postcolonial writers is particularly uneasy. In 2005, Pascal Blanchard argued that France has been rather slow in coming to terms with its colonial past, and that it still has not fully done so. It can be problematic to group all types of (im)migrant writing together in France (perhaps even more problematic than in Québec), as a distinction must be made between non-postcolonial writers for whom French is generally not a native language (e.g., Samuel Beckett or Nancy Huston), and postcolonial writers who are usually very familiar with French. Non-postcolonial writers may well highlight their origins or multiple cultural allegiances but generally make a conscious choice to be part of literary production in France. However, postcolonial writers are in a more complicated position regarding France and the French language.

They are arguably also more likely to subvert the rules (see, e.g., Porra). In my study, I focus on writers born in France's postcolonial societies (North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, and also the French Caribbean)—or born in France of parentage from those societies—in order to highlight some of the challenges they face in France. Postcolonial writers often face great difficulty in achieving recognition as legitimate French authors. I argue that restrictive boundaries of categorization started to become blurred, but that it is still too early to rejoice partly due to the continuing cultural ghettoization of many of these writers and the traditional differentiation of their work from French literature. I also discuss the 2007 the manifesto *Pour une "littérature-monde" en français*, which sought to address some of these imbalances. The manifesto was initiated by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud, and was published first in the newspaper *Le Monde* and then in modified form by Gallimard the same year (see Le Bris, Rouaud, Almassy). Charles Forsdick has called the manifesto "a collective statement regarding postnational 'world-literature in French'" (125). Indeed, we can divide the years between the start of the new millennium and 2015 into two distinct periods: 2000 to 2007 and the years after the publication of the manifesto. When discussing some of the aims of the manifesto, I also look at its weaknesses and limitations.

In France the usual term to describe writing by authors of an immigrant background either born elsewhere or with one or more foreign-born parent, is *littérature issue de l'immigration*. However, *littérature migrante* is sometimes used, following the usage in Québec. Both of these terms are fraught as they can ghettoize writers of an (im)migrant background into a marginal category and can appear to restrict them to certain migration-related topics (displacement, marginalization, linguistic and generational struggles, etc). I avoid the terms where possible while recognizing that they can be useful in certain contexts. I also reflect on some commonalities between several French writers from the majority population and writers from an immigrant background. A number of authors of solely French parentage write about events concerned with the colonial past or about issues relating to the current migrant crisis or about immigration more generally. These writers are as much part of the literatures of exile, immigration, or of postcolonial writing (depending where they fit in) as their counterparts with a personal background of immigration. Likewise, writers with an immigrant background are increasingly breaking out of pre-defined categories. Some are managing to be published in standard French collections rather than in special immigration-based or Francophone categories and many are choosing a wider range of topics than those traditionally seen as their domain. This means that some of the boundaries of "(im)migrant writing" in France are being broken down, both from the outside in and from the inside out.

Before I examine the literary and political climate in which the 2007 manifesto was published, a brief overview of postcolonial writing in France is helpful. It is beyond the scope of this article to deal in detail with the subtleties of this field, which already has a substantial history of criticism. What follows is necessarily brief, while also aiming to give a sense of some key players and developments since the interwar years. While the 1980s are often held up as the decade of the emergence in France of postcolonial writers dealing with issues of migrancy and/or immigration, the roots of such concerns stretch back to the 1930s, when many African intellectuals came to Paris to study for a period (less commonly to immigrate). *Mirages de Paris* by Ousmane Socé Diop (1937) might be considered the first of its kind, but between this text and *L'Aventure ambiguë* by Cheikh Hamidou Kane (1961) a whole series of texts deal with the disillusionment of African students or intellectuals in France. The 1950s saw the publication of the first novels about the difficult conditions of migrant workers reconstructing France during the economic boom of the *trente glorieuses* (1945-1975), many of whom expected to move to other countries or ultimately to return to the land of origin. Amongst the most famous of these texts are *Les Boucs* by the Moroccan-born Driss Chraïbi (1955) and *Le Docker noir* by the Senegalese writer Ousmane Sembène (1956). In the 1960s and 1970s, migration became less obvious as an area of reflection or theme in writing in French, although it was present in writers such as Yambo Ouologuem, Valentin Yves Mudimbe, and Lamine Diakhaté and remained a concern in Sembène's writing. Other postcolonial writers were more concerned with the situation in their homelands during this period, and focused on the turmoils in their newly independent countries of origin, for example writers from Africa such as Ahmadou Kourouma, Henri Lopes, or Tierno Monenembo. At this time also, the Caribbean writer Edouard Glissant left Paris to go back to Martinique where he forged the concept of *antillanité*, to rethink Caribbean identity in relation to the specific geography of the region. From the middle of the 1970s a few Maghrebi writers again tackled the difficulties of migrant workers in France, or of those who stayed on as immigrants, for example Rachid Boudjedra, with his novel *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée* (1975). Boudjedra only lived in France for three years and cannot really be considered an immigrant, a

fact that underlines the ambivalence of the category of (im)migrant literature: does the definition of this lie more in the content of the books or in the biography of their authors? For the 1970s, we could also mention *La Réclusion solitaire* by Tahar Ben Jelloun (1976), which deals with the loneliness and sexual deprivation of migrant workers or *Habel* by Mohammed Dib (1977), which represents the rootless existence of the migrant in a poetic and metaphoric way.

The 1980s mark the emergence of what is generally termed *beur* literature, a body of texts produced by the second generation of North African immigrants living in Paris and in the industrial suburbs. This literary phenomenon echoed the political context including the rise of the extreme right National Front, the backlash of the "Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme" in 1983 (renamed "la Marche des beurs" by the media), and the creation of *SOS racisme* in 1984, a movement of non-governmental organizations. Public opinion became sensitized to migration-related issues and thus more receptive to novels about such issues. The category of *beur* literature soon gave rise to much debate and critical analysis in the early 1990s (see, e.g., Hargreaves; Laronde) and it is still controversial. It would lie beyond the scope of this article to go further on this point. Let me just remind that most of the texts published in those years tell the story of young people from the second generation who struggle to find their place in society. These books often have a clear biographical slant and are written in a language bearing witness to its origins: the street, the *banlieue*, often with strong marks of orality. The most well-known are *Le Thé au harem d'Archibald* by Mehdi Charef (1983), *Le Gône du chaaba* by Azouz Begag (1986), and *Georgette!* by Farida Belghoul (1986). While 1980s texts about (im)migration were for the most part written by Maghrebi writers, the following decade saw more and more writers from sub-Saharan Africa dealing with this topic. It is worth mentioning that this period was marked by tougher measures against illegal immigration and the rise of xenophobia and racism. Paradoxically, this period was also marked by the growing visibility of some artists or sportsmen with an immigrant or migrant background: from Zinedine Zidane to Yannick Noah including the comedians Pascal Légitimus or the rapper MC Solaar. In 2003, the critic Odile Cazenave coined the expression of "Afrique sur Seine" to talk about the new generation of Black writers, in her essay of the same name. In comparison to the *beur* writers, most of them were not French born and consequently their texts deal more with the country of origin and its nostalgia. Yet they also directly addressed the difficulties of living in France and of constructing their identity. Some of them had actually been living in France and publishing for many years, but initially mainly about Africa. This is the case of the Guinean writer Tierno Monenembo who, after two novels set in Africa, published in 1991 *Un rêve utile*, a novel about recently-arrived and more established Africans in a Lyon suburb. In 1992, also after two novels set in Africa, the Cameroon-born writer Calixthe Beyala published *Le Petit prince de Belleville*, about a Malian family in the Parisian suburbs. Loukoum, the seven-year-old narrator, recounts his everyday life between two cultures and his confrontation with racism. In 1998, Alain Mabanckou published *Bleu blanc rouge*, a novel in which a young Congolese man sitting in jail before his expulsion from France tells of his failed attempt to find his place in French society. Ironically, this was also the year that the media in France were trumpeting the slogan of "Black blanc *beur*" after the World Cup football victory.

Turning now to the climate of the years of the new millennium, the early 2000s were marked by a flurry of texts by writers with a personal history of immigration, some of whom also wrote about migration. At the very least, their publication indicates a certain curiosity amongst the readership in France. A good number of the novels that gained literary recognition in the early years of the millennium were by writers of North African or Sub-Saharan African descent, including Abdelkader Djemai's *Gare du Nord* (2003) and *Le Nez sur la vitre* (2005), Azouz Begag's *Le Marteau Pique-coeur* (2004); Abdourahman Waberi's *Transit* (2003), and *D'eaux douces* (2004) by the French writer of Martiniquan parentage, Fabienne Kanor. The fact that in 2006, several non-French-born writers were distinguished during the literary prize season may be another indicator of a growing openness in France to works by authors who are not typically French: Alain Mabanckou (born in the French Congo), Jonathan Littell (born in the USA), Nancy Huston (born in Canada), and Hédi Kaddour (born in Tunisia) were awarded five of the main literary prizes.

Two novels by authors with a postcolonial background were successful in the early years of the millennium. The first was the 2003 novel *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* by the Senegalese writer Fatou Diome whose previous book, a collection of short stories called *La Préférence nationale* (2001), was a scathing critique of French racism towards Black people. The second was Faiza Guène's *Kiffe-kiffe demain* (2004). Diome's novel tells the story of a Senegalese-born writer who has moved to France and who tries to convince her younger brother to give up his project of traveling to Europe to start a career as a soccer player, exhorting him to stay in Senegal. The novel earned critical acclaim and sold up to 200,000 copies. Guène's novel (her first) was even more successful than Diome's, selling 400,000 copies. Guène was born in 1985 to Algerian parents in the outskirts of Paris. The young age of this teenage author, who was nineteen at the time of publication, and the habit in France of considering literary texts by writers of North African descent as mere autobiographical documents led to a certain marginalization of her novel. The book is marketed as youth literature in France and as a teaching support to speak about the *banlieue*, while its literary creativity, lively style, and ironical take on the social services system in France have been more fully recognized by critics outside the country.

Outside the literary sphere, several signs suggest that French society is becoming more open to its multicultural reality and more willing to tackle some aspects of its colonial history. In 2006, the film *Indigènes* (marketed in English as *Days of Glory*) by Rachid Bouchareb, a filmmaker born in France to Algerian parents, was enormously successful. The film tells of North African soldiers serving in the Free French Forces during the Second World War and experiencing discrimination and disillusionment. The film had such an impact on public opinion that it contributed to a partial recognition by the French state of the pension rights of soldiers from the former colonies. Also in 2006, Zinedine Zidane, the French soccer player of Algerian parentage, was elected "favorite personality" in France and held this title five

times between 2003 and 2007. The record is held by another personality of immigrant extraction: Yannick Noah, a successful tennis player (the election is held twice a year). In 2007, after a long and controversial gestation, The *Musée de l'immigration* opened its doors in Paris. While the worth of this museum has been debated on many fronts, to date it can be seen as a largely positive addition to the spread of knowledge about immigration and has included exhibits on French racism and xenophobia.

The political climate between 2000 and 2007 was particularly tense. After Nicolas Sarkozy's nomination to the post of Minister of the Interior in 2002, various laws were voted in to try to restrict immigration and measures were taken to deport illegal immigrants. These measures eventually led to large-scale deportation of Roma families, which have continued in France despite European Union interventions in 2010 and 2013. In 2004, the law against the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in schools (*la loi du 15 mars 2004*) provoked heated debates, since it seemed to be mainly targeting Muslims. A highly controversial law in February 2005 (*la loi du 23 février 2005*) ruled that positive effects of colonization must be taught in schools. This led to strong reactions from associations and intellectuals. In November 2005, after the tragic accidental death in Clichy-sous-bois in the Parisian *banlieue* of two teenagers who were trying to escape the police, the suburbs of many major French cities were rocked by three weeks of unprecedented riots in various parts of the country. According to Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, and Sandrine Lemaire, the violence of the debates and their at times rather chaotic character is the sign of a "retour du refoulé" "a resurfacing of repressed memory" (*La Fracture coloniale* 10)—and of the traditional roles of dominator versus dominated in a postcolonial paradigm. It was in this conflicted and paradoxical context of curiosity, tentative openings, centralizing interventions by the French state and renewed hostility to non-European cultural difference, that in March 2007, a few months before the election of Sarkozy to the presidency, the newspaper *Le Monde* published a *Pour une "littérature-monde" en français*. It was signed by 44 authors, many from France's former colonies, including Tahar Ben Jelloun, Maryse Condé, Édouard Glissant, Koffi Kwahulé, Alain Mabanckou, Wilfried N'Sondé, Boualem, Sansal Waberi, and Abdourahman Waberi.

Foregrounding the number of literary prizes awarded in the preceding years to writers from outside France (expressed as "outre-France" in the manifesto), the *Pour une "littérature-monde" en français* postulated that this was the sign of "a Copernican revolution" that would bring about the dissolution of the French dominating center. The signatories argued that the category of "francophone literatures," long seen as a ghetto for non-French writers and as a legacy of colonialism, should be replaced by a world literature in French. There was a high proportion of signatories from the majority population with no direct background of immigration, almost all of whom were male, including Didier Daeninckx, Jean Vautrin, and the initiators Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud. Others such as J.M.G Le Clézio and Alain Borer represented French fascination with—and experience of—cultures outside France. Notable representatives of other French-speaking societies included Québécois-Canadian writers Jacques Godbout and Dany Laferrière, the Haitian-born Québec novelist, and Édouard Glissant from Martinique. An examination of the signatories suggests that a new "world literature" in French was meant to include writers from outside France, but also from within France including those with a background of immigration or immigrant descent and those more clearly anchored in French culture with an openness to other cultures and histories. The signatories stated their wish to hasten the death of *francophonie* and lamented the fact that authors stemming from elsewhere are often considered minor writers and reduced to a certain exoticism. They argued that French literature has become a literature turning upon itself like a whirling dervish and should rub up against the rest of the world to capture its essence, its vital energies.

Many scholars and critics pointed out the weaknesses and ambiguities of *Pour une "littérature-monde" en français*, not least because of the fact that the initiators of the manifesto, Le Bris and Rouaud, as white male French writers, are part of the dominant center themselves (see Dutton). Likewise, some of the signatories who appeared to be complaining about being marginalized were actually prominent figures of the French literary scene, including Tahar Ben Jelloun and Nancy Huston (see Porra). The notion of considering the French literary prizes as a token of literary value or even representativeness also seemed to some critics to be either naive or opportunistic. Others complained that some marginalized categories were forgotten and had no representatives in the signatories, for example female French writers with no "(im)migrant" background or *beur* or *banlieue* writers (see Thomas <<https://actesbranly.revues.org/505>>). Critics of the manifesto also argued that it was not helpful to argue that French literary production in 2007 had no object other than itself, citing the societal engagement and multiplicity of cultural viewpoints that can be found readily on the French literary scene today. Others pointed out that the position against the "Francophone" category in literature is not new and is based on many previous studies and declarations and contains many inherited ambiguities. Critics included Tirthankar Chanda, Amin Maalouf, Anna Moï, and Alain Mabanckou. It was also noted that many of the signatories are attached to institutions promoting *francophonie* or at least benefit from such institutions, for example by participating in literary festivals of francophone writing.

*Pour une littérature-monde* (Le Bris, Rouaud, Almassy) -- the volume following the *Le Monde's Pour une "littérature-monde" en français* -- showed that a common position was hard to find, since the different positions expressed by the writers are often contradictory. However despite this fact and the above criticisms, the impact of the manifesto cannot be ignored. Countless critics have addressed the questions it raises, including Camille de Toledo in a 2008 analysis, the contributors to a 2010 online Dossier published by the Université de Grenoble on the topic, and in 2013 the edited volume by Cécilia Francis and Robert Viau. In any case, the manifesto is interesting because of the celebrity of its signatories and the publication in *Le Monde*, which brought the debate to a wider audience (see Murphy). David Murphy points out that in order to obtain visibility, the manifesto had to play the game and rely on the typical consecrating institutions, such as the French literary prizes. While its argumentative flaws may be criticized, the success of its strategy must still be acknowledged. It is arguable that many

marginal authors who were able to publish texts in its aftermath would otherwise have found it more difficult.

Since the publication of the manifesto and the associated volume of essays, a few changes can be noted in the postcolonial literary sphere in France. One is the (timid) appearance of what could be called an "Afropean Literature," a literature which addresses the complexity and multicultural nature of French society from the "inside." The Cameroon-born writer Leonora Miano, who popularized the term, is certainly the main figure of this type of literature. Another point of interest is the increased development of a literature freed from the connection to autobiography and native country. Lastly, it seems more and more possible for writers with postcolonial backgrounds to escape ghettoization, as can be seen by the success of Marie NDiaye with *Trois femmes puissantes* (2009) and of Wilfried N'Sondé's *Berlinoise* (2015). Miano was born in 1973 in Cameroon and grew up in a well-to-do family in Douala, the capital. She came to France in 1991, where she studied Anglo-American literature. She currently lives in Paris. In 2005 and 2006, she published two well-received novels about an imaginary country in Africa": *L'Intérieur de la nuit* (2005) and *Contours du jour qui vient* (2006). Stylistically, her novels are examples of hybridization: the language is an elaborate and classical French interwoven with Cameroonian and Anglophone touches. The cultural references are also mixed, with many allusions to music from various backgrounds: African, US-American, Caribbean, European, etc. 2007, the year after the publication of the manifesto, was a turning point for Miano. That year, she published a collection of short stories, *Afropean Soul*, and a novel, *Tels des astres éteints*. Both works focus on what she calls the "Afropeans," that is, French people from an African or Caribbean background. In 2010, she published *Blues for Elise*, another Afropean novel, but one that is much lighter and more positive than the two previous books. It tells the stories of four Afropean women friends in Paris who call themselves (in English) "bigger than life" and are just normal French women. They go to the hairdresser, visit art exhibitions, go to restaurants, talk about the election of Obama, fall in love, etc. The novel relates their love stories, their everyday life, their doubts, their fears and hopes for the future.

Miano has recently written that she chose in *Blues pour Elise* to show educated Black people of French nationality who have always lived in France and who make a decent living without suffering from any particular problems of identity or cultural memory. She thinks that such individuals are almost never represented in literature, although they embody something extremely positive (*Habiter la frontière* 139). Recent years have seen a growing body of work that foregrounds Black characters in Paris who are no longer immigrants, for example Kanor's *D'eaux douces* (2004) and to some extent Mabanckou's *Black Bazar* (2009). In *D'eaux douces*, Kanor tells the story of a young French-born woman of Guadeloupean parentage who tries to find a balance between her origins, the history of the Caribbean, and her life as a Black girl born in metropolitan France. In *Black Bazar*, the main character was born in the Congo, but his girlfriend is a Black French-born woman suffering from identity problems. Ironically, her surname is "Couleur d'origine." *Debout-payé*, the début novel by Gauz (2014; aka Armand Patrick Gbaka Brédé) is similar to Miano's Afropean writing in that it is immersed in normal French life. However the main characters are immigrants. Gauz is the *nom de plume* of Armand Patrick Gbaka-Brédé. He was born in Abidjan in the Ivory Coast in 1971. *Debout-payé* came out with a small publishing house (Nouvel Attila), but was, surprisingly, successful. From one perspective, it a classic tale of (im)migrant workers, concentrating on the typical job as a security guard which seems to be the fate of so many Black male migrants. However, it is also an original and sharp presentation of French society today: unlike previous novels about (im)migrant workers, a large part of the story plays out in a fashion store on the Champs-Élysées, where the main character spends his boring days observing clients coming and going. The novel tells its story of immigration in France through three stages of the job of security guard (what it calls the "bronze age" from 1960-1980, the "golden age" from 1980-2000, and the "lead age" after the 2001 Twin Towers attack in New York). Three chapters intertwine the stories of Ossiri and Ferdinand, two (im)migrant workers from different generations. Other chapters constitute short and humorous notes about the people Ossiri observes when working or about life as a security guard more generally. As such, the novel, which also oscillates between fiction, documentary, and pamphlet, is creative.

Looking now at the increased development of a body of literature by writers of immigrant background or parentage that has been freed from the connection to autobiography and native country, a key text to consider is Wilfried N'Sondé, *Berlinoise* (2015). N'Sondé, who started his literary career with a work that was labeled a *banlieue* novel (*Le Coeur des enfants léopards*, 2007) was able to publish this novel in the regular collection of the publisher Actes Sud, which is the sign of a certain recognition and establishment in the literary field. *Berlinoise* eschews all the usual clichés about Black immigrant writing: it tells the story of a young Frenchman who comes to Berlin after the Fall of the Wall, falls in love with a German woman and with the multicultural nature of the city. It is a European love story without any mention of the miseries of Africa, the *banlieue* crises, or illegal immigration, all themes which underlie N'Sondé's previous novels. For the most part, the novel has also been marketed without any mention of the author's African origins or any attempt to link it to a tradition of immigrant writing: the front cover evokes Berlin and the summary on the back cover bears no mention of the fact that one of the characters is Black (although this plays only a minor role in the plot). It must be noted, however, that N'Sondé has had a slightly unusual itinerary. Although he spent his youth and student years in Paris and was born in the Congo, he has been living in Berlin for twenty years. Indeed, he was living in Berlin when his novel was published in France in 2007. One may assume that his position outside the French literary establishment has guaranteed him a certain freedom.

NDiaye also lives in Berlin now and has described her move there as related to the coming to power of the Sarkozy government and her wish to escape the France that his government represented. Her case, although untypical, is interesting: she is perhaps the only Black writer in France who has managed to enter fully the French literary field without being considered as Francophone or (im)migrant. Born in France to a French mother and a Senegalese father who left his family early, she always claimed she

never had the chance to take on a double culture and was simply "French." At the beginning of her career, she had to defend herself against all attempts to make her a "Franco-something" (Franco-African, Franco-Sénégalaise, etc.) (see Moudileno). But after many novels published by the very Parisian Editions de Minuit, a play put on by the Comédie française (a rare honor for a living author and for a woman of any cultural group) and now the Prix Goncourt, and other prizes, she is a well-established French writer who does not appear to be marginalized in any way. NDiaye at first addressed neither the subject of (im)migration nor that of Africa, but from 2006 onward her position seems to have evolved. In 2006, she co-wrote with Claire Denis the screenplay for *White Material*, a film set in Africa (the film was released in 2009). In 2008, she published "Les Soeurs," a short story which served as an introduction to *La Condition noire* (2008), an edited volume by her brother Pap NDiaye, a sociologist, dealing with the situation of Black people in France. It tells the story of two Black sisters in France and the different choices they make in terms of their identity. In *Trois femmes puissantes*, she sketches the destinies of three women between Africa and Europe. It is as if having conquered her right to be seen as a legitimate French writer, she can now write openly about (im)migration if she so chooses. It is unlikely that the 2007 manifesto influenced NDiaye's writing in any way, as she secludes herself from French literary life living in Berlin and avoids attachment to any group. In fact, NDiaye's case may show that, in reality, the ghetto denounced by the signatories from the manifesto can be sidestepped. Her success shows that it is possible to become part of the French literary canon as a writer with a postcolonial background. Yet, the manifesto does seem to have held some truth in her case as it was because of her refusal of the Francophone category so disliked by the manifesto signatories that she rose to such heights in the French canon.

While these writers with a postcolonial background have been writing outside of expected categories, the same is true for some writers from the majority population. In recent years, the drama of migrants dying on Europe's doorstep has inspired many authors. Along with NDiaye's *Trois femmes puissantes*, the subject has been dealt with not only by writers like Diome (*Celles qui attendent* 2010) or by African writers living in their homeland, like Abasse Ndione (*Mbêke Mi* 2010), but also by several French writers with no postcolonial or (im)migrant background. These include Laurent Gaudé's *Eldorado* (2006), Karine Tuil's *Douce France* (2007), Delphine Coulin's *Samba pour la France* (2011), and Mathias Énard's *Rue des voleurs* (2012). This may be the beginning of a literature of (im)migration that no longer needs to be defined in terms of its authors' origins. A similar analysis could also apply to the commemoration of the massacre in Paris on 17 October 1961, when large numbers of peacefully demonstrating Algerians (some say up to 200) were killed by the French police. Several novelists have tackled the topic, from the Algerian-born Abdelkader Djemai (*Gare du Nord* 2003) to Leïla Sebbar who was born in Algeria to a French mother and Algerian father and who has lived most of her life in France (*La Seine était rouge* 1999), to Didier Daeninckx, a French writer (and one of the signatories of the 2007 manifesto) with no biographical connection to Algeria and no migrant background (*Meurtres pour mémoire* 1984). As with the novels on the migration crisis, the blurring of who writes what is a salutary development and indicates that we have come some way towards blurring restrictive boundaries.

However, it is too soon to rejoice and some doubts about a real renewal and reconfiguration of the literary field remain. First, it must be noted that although some authors such as N'Sondé or Mabanckou manage to be published in the general collection of their respective publishers (Actes Sud and Gallimard), collections still exist that emphasize the (im)migrant or postcolonial origins of the authors. These include the "Continents noirs" collection at Gallimard, "Lettres africaines" at Actes Sud, and "Encres noires" at L'Harmattan. Obviously such collections have allowed attention to be drawn to authors who would otherwise have found it difficult to emerge. Their founders are often committed figures who work hard to share their enthusiasm for new voices. However, the fact that it is still difficult for postcolonial writers to publish without having to market their origins shows that some boundaries remain. Second, although Miano was awarded the prestigious Prize Femina in 2013, it is noteworthy that this prize crowned an "African novel" (*La Saison de l'ombre*). Unlike the aforementioned *Blues pour Elise* or *Tels des astres éteints*, *La Saison de l'ombre* does not deal with Afropean identity, but focuses on the impact of the slave trade on Africa. While Miano may enjoy a certain fame in France, she seems to find it difficult to gain full recognition for her Afropean novels. She has complained that her books about Black French characters in France always receive less attention from the media than the ones about Africa (*Habiter la frontière* 173). Moreover, most of the articles about the Prize Femina for *La Saison de l'ombre* focused on the novel's topic of the slave trade and almost completely ignored its linguistic creativity. Yet, Miano's writing uses a poetic and musical prose. *La Saison de l'ombre* also contains traces of Duala, a Cameroonian language. In *Blues pour Elise*, the narrative is interrupted by short "interludes" (the author's term), written in Cameroonian French, with a glossary at the end of the novel.

In conclusion, while it remains to be seen whether what is termed "(im)migrant writing" in France can ultimately manage to escape the limits of the Francophone literary system, we stand today at a crucial point and at least some progress has been made. In this process the *Pour une "littérature-monde" en français*—both the essay and the edited volume—despite inherent limits and weaknesses, represents a turning point. This is perhaps not so much because of the sometimes confused ideas, but because of the debates the text initiated and the subsequent enlargement of our horizon of expectations. We can only hope that this will bring about a calling into question of traditional patterns and perceptions by readers and publishers. Principally, it is to be hoped that writers with an (im)migration or postcolonial background will gain the freedom to write about any kind of topic and be seen primarily as writers, rather than as spokespersons for a country, a race, or a social milieu. This expansion of horizons would give readers the opportunity to reread some less known works by authors who attempted such an approach rather too early for their time, for example the Scandinavian novels by Mohamed Dib and published between 1985 and 1990 (*Neiges*; *Le Sommeil*; *Les Terrasses*), or *Violon* (2006) by the Vietnamese-born writer Anna Moï, a novel set in Normandy. We can also hope that more writers without

any (im)migrant background will feel concerned by postcolonial and migrant issues. It would be a sign that France is finally becoming more aware of the effects of its postcolonial past. As Blanchard noted, the time has come to report that postcolonialism gave birth not only to new social realities over there, in the former colonies, but also at the very heart of France: "L'heure est venue de rendre compte que le devenir postcolonial a non seulement donné naissance à de nouvelles réalités sociétales, là-bas, dans les anciennes colonies, mais aussi au cœur de l'hexagone" ("L'Identité" 134). Novels by Enard, Daeninckx, and others indicate some hope for such a future. These desirable developments would mean that there is finally an acknowledgment that it is the literary quality of texts and the relevance of what they express that legitimize them and not the color of the writer's skin or their passport.

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