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Hip-Hop/Scotch: "Sounding Francophone" in French and United States Cultures

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FRANCESCA CANADÉ SAUTMAN

Hip-Hop/scotch: “Sounding Francophone” in French and United States Cultures

So far from your family, on the foreign shore,
Death swung its scythe over your brow,
And I, in my bitter sorrow, I have come
To ask of these crosses, these willows, these tombs:
Where does my brother lie?

—Armand Lanusse, “Un frère. Au tombeau de son frère,”
in *Les Cénelles* (1845).

Look at the States where black people agonize. Calculated
genocide that the state supervises. Bodies lying in a heap, a blank
check for death.

The forces of evil are afoot. 80% of youth growing up behind bars.
In the ghetto, it's a free range . . .

. . . Is that what you want in France, a formula made in USA?
Death legalized who said crime does not pay. That's the way it is in
Uncle Sam's land. Maybe soon right in front of your house . . .

—Faouzi Tarkhani, “Les Lascars se lassent,”
Guerrier pour la paix (1999)

BECOMING “FRANCOPHONE”

The first truly Francophone author was probably Guillaume de Salluste du Bartas (1544–90): in his trilingual dialogue of muses—Latin, French, and Gascon—written on the occasion of Catherine of Medicis's and Marguerite de Navarre's visit to Gascony, his native Gascon tongue was a legitimate competitor with French and Latin and even surpassed the other two in poetic excellence.¹ But in du Bartas's day, because French was still an uneven cultural contender with Latin and Greek,

1. Guillaume de Salluste, seigneur du Bartas, “Accueil de la Reine de Navarre,” in *The Works of Guillaume de Salluste, sieur du Bartas: A Critical Edition with Introduction, Commentary and Variants*, ed. Urban Tigner Holmes, Jr., John Coriden Lyons, and Robert White Linker (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935–40), vol. 3, 477–81.

there was no political need for a *Francophonie*, so the term had no reason to be, and would have held no currency. Du Bartas's embracing of the Gascon muse belonged to another history, the protracted, centuries-long cultural and political interpellation² by regional and smaller national languages in relation to French. "Thinking Francophone" only became possible after French colonial interests had converged in a vision of empire bolstered by the rhetoric of the *mission civilisatrice*. Hegemonic colonial strategies were enacted through language as well as through military conquest and, later, economic control.³ Francophone writing outside of Europe and Quebec had first to result, even indirectly, from that colonial enterprise to then work within and against the empire.⁴ Yet, the way all of this was articulated varied tremendously throughout the "Francophone"⁵ world: on the African continent, the focus of this essay, regional and local histories of invasion, colonial organization, dominance, and resistance. Cultural institutions in the United States have also received literature and ideas conveyed in French by people who are neither French nor European, or by French citizens who are of non-European origin and not "white" in a variety of ways.

This essay addresses the relationship between "being/speaking Francophone" and forms of ethnic-cultural dissent in France and the U.S. In both countries, terms such as *Francophone* and *Francophonie* are often captured by specific political agendas and practices.⁶ The in-

2. Following the use in Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 7–8 and 121–24.

3. See Anne Judge, "La francophonie. Mythes, masques et réalités," *La francophonie, mythes, masques et réalités. Enjeux politiques et culturels*, ed. Bridget Jones, Arnauld Mignet, and Patrick Corcoran (Paris: Publisud, 1996), 19–43; Alice Sindzingré, "À quoi sert l'Afrique? Une question française," *Afrique, la fin du Bas Empire, LiMes. Revue française de géopolitique* 3 (1997), 15–26. This volume will be referenced as *LiMes*.

4. On the intricacies of this particular relationship, see Christopher L. Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads: Essays on Francophone African Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

5. Throughout this essay I have tried to indicate the problematic nature of terms such as "Francophone." I use *Francophonie* in italics as a foreign word, and capitalize it as a political institution; Francophone by itself, without quotation marks, when it is accurate within a limited use, such as "Francophone literature," or a "Francophone writer"; *Francophone* when I refer to a term or to its usage by others; and "Francophone" in quotation marks when the term is being discussed or contested, whether by others or by myself.

6. See Stephen Smith, "Paris vs. Washington," *LiMes*, 53–65, and Guy Rossatanga-Rignault, "Vieilles lunes et nouveaux empires. Un regard africain sur la France et les États-Unis," *LiMes*, 67–79; André Bourgeot, "USA. Main basse sur l'Afrique," *LiMes*, 81–88.

herent flaws of "Francophone" as a conceptual frame have been noted increasingly in both cultures, and *Francophonie* is now redefining itself according to specific race and class parameters not only in France but also in the USA with the advent of large immigration movements from the "Francophone" world. What it means to be "Francophone" involves complex interfacing between various languages, including English and French, between competing discursive claims made on the basis of linguistic home and the particular forms of cultural and linguistic hybridity, such as French hip-hop culture and world music.

The term *Francophone* was first coined at the end of the nineteenth century, by the French geographer Onésime Reclus, to designate people who spoke French in regional or national territories where French was not the main or only language; it appeared in dictionaries in 1930, but was not really used until after World War II.⁷ Different dates have been proposed for the first African Francophone literary text, based on Western cultural parameters. Lylian Kesteloot's famous 1961 thesis made *Négritude* the watershed of *Francophone* African and Caribbean literature, while all writers before the movement were "precursors." As Christopher Miller remarks, describing an author as a "precursor of Négritude," as Senghor did with respect to Maran, is tantamount to "honoring him and subordinating him at the same time" (11). In Kesteloot's title, the term "black," encompassing Caribbean and African as harbingers of *Négritude*, did not denote Africa in any other way, a sign, perhaps, of pre-independence Africa's "transparency" in Western eyes, as a "Black continent" (*continent noir*) that erased the historical and cultural narratives of Africa.⁸ Such parameters raise once more the vexed question of whether "the subaltern can speak."⁹ Subaltern by definition, pre-independence African literatures in French

7. Jean-Marc Moura, *Littératures francophones et théorie postcoloniale* (Paris: PUF, 1999), 1, note 2.

8. Lylian Kesteloot, *Les écrivains noirs de langue française. Naissance d'une littérature*, (Brussels: Université libre de Bruxelles, 1963); English translation: *Black Writers in French: A Literary History of Négritude*, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974). Kesteloot's 1967 anthology of African literature in French was widely used for decades in US universities, a real force in defining the canon outside of Africa (*Anthologie négro-africaine: panorama critique des prosateurs, poètes et dramaturges noirs du XXe siècle* [Verviers: Gérard & Co., 1967]). It also bolstered the distinction between North and ("Black") Sub-Saharan Africa. See Abdennour Benantar, "Les Arabes et l'Afrique. Nous n'avons pas besoin d'intermédiaire!" *LiMes*, 269–86.

9. This refers to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's now axiomatic essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretations of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 271–313.

were presumed to be knowable through Western eyes and Western pronouncements, hegemonic in their selection criteria and aesthetic platforms regardless of their occasional anticolonial stance. For Kesteloot, for instance, several texts were to be excluded from this early canon as mere panegyrics of colonialism (Miller, 10). However, beginning with Guy Ossito Midiohouan and followed by Miller (11–13), others have identified as a first text Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne's *Les trois volontés de Malic* (1920),¹⁰ while an argument can be made that the first narrative Senegalese texts in French were written as early as 1850.¹¹ The six years of difference with another work often mentioned as a first "literary" Francophone African work (Rouch and Clavreuil, 392), Bakary Diallo's *Force-Bonté* (1926), might seem quite minor. The discrepancy is nonetheless symptomatic of the assumptions of Western critics about "writing in" the Francophone literary voice, establishing a canon, and imposing their own views of literature. Subaltern status is confirmed by the difficulty encountered in simply reformulating the questions, part of which is identifying a "first text." The history of Francophone literature in the Maghreb might have been a similarly contested terrain, but at the very least there is consensus that the first Algerian work in French appeared in 1920, and other works—often of a fairly clear colonial obedience—were being produced in French by the 1930s.¹² Needless to say, a brief look at the Caribbean would yield much earlier dates, well back into the nineteenth century.

Yet, during the early fifties, other voices were already formulating a corpus of *Francophone* African literature with a history and a genealogy. *Présence africaine* was publishing interviews with and comments on African authors along with texts, for example its 1955 publication of Abdou Anta Kâ's first short story. A biographical note explained

10. Guy Ossito Midiohouan, *L'idéologie dans la littérature négro-africaine d'expression française* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1986).

11. In 1850 a Senegalese métis, Léopold Panet (1820–1859), published a travel text "La relation d'un voyage du Sénégal à Soueïra" in the *Revue coloniale*; another Senegalese of mixed parentage, the catholic priest David Boilat (1814–1901), published his *Esquisses sénégalaises* in 1863 (Paris). Between 1912 and 1913 a third Senegalese writer, Ahmadou Dugué-Clédor, wrote two historical essays. Alain Rouch and Gérard Clavreuil, *Littératures nationales d'écriture française. Afrique noire, Caraïbes, Océan Indien* (Paris: Bordas, 1987), 392–93.

12. Charles Bonn and Naget Khadda, "Introduction," *Littérature maghrébine d'expression française*, ed. Charles Bonn, Naget Khadda, and Abdalah Mdarhi-Alacin (Vanves: Edicef, 1986), 5–21. The first such work was Mohamed Benchérif's partially autobiographical *Ahmed ben Mustapha, goumier*. Benchérif was a colonial administrator, *caïd*, and captain in the French army, who espoused the virtues of French colonial power.

that he had no employment or home, came from a culturally and religiously mixed family, and had already written plays performed in Senegal, in particular on the radio (Radio-Dakar), as was often the case with African theater in the twentieth century.¹³

The term *Francophone* did not catch on right away; it began to appear in titles of works around 1963¹⁴ coinciding with the rise of independence movements in Africa south of the Sahara. Interestingly, early texts were already heralding both the triumphant and the alarmist trends in *Francophonie*.¹⁵ In the 1960s the term made inroads in doctoral dissertation topics in the USA, first in relation to education and economic development, and then in titles addressing literature, more frequently by the 1970s. Scholarship and commentary on Francophone literature nonetheless appear to be a phenomenon of the last decades: a cursory look at the MLA's database shows that between 1900 and 1987, 745 entries concerned *Francophone* topics; there are 881 for the 1987–2000 period alone. Nor did the term hold purchase with all: several critical works written in France in the late 1970s and 1980s consistently avoided *Francophone*, and used *French-language* or *of French expression* instead.¹⁶

The study of Francophone literature shifted and corrected the Eurocentric view of French literature (narrowly conceived as literature written in Europe), but could also hide the term's links to France's colonial past. The subaltern was thus ushered into the French academy, but only nominally empowered to speak since the condition of that speech remained the willingness to address, even at the onset of the twenty-first century, the relationship of the postcolonial writing subject to the French language as fount, model, and mirror. In *Francophone* subjects the French academy discovered a rich academic field, but it was rapidly lost to a unique form of discursive control. The use of French at a variety of levels—native language, lingua franca, administrative tool, academic instrument—became more than a simple classification tool. The will to classify evident in discussions of what constitutes *Fran-*

13. Abdou Anta Kâ, "L'envers du Masque," *Présence africaine* 13 (Aug.–Sept. 1955). In the interview, Kâ remarked that he had no degrees, for "degrees would separate me from the people."

14. Alfred de Soras, *Relations de l'Église et de l'État dans les pays d'Afrique francophone: Vues prospectives*. [Paris:] Mame [1963].

15. Hyacinthe de Montera, *La francophonie en marche* (Paris: Sedimo, 1966); Gérard Tougas, *La francophonie en péril* (Montréal: Cercle du livre de France, 1967).

16. Robert Cornevin's classic *Littératures d'Afrique noire de langue française* (Paris: PUF, 1976), or Rouch and Clavreuil's 1987 work. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France currently uses *littérature africaine d'expression française* as a classification category.

cophonie, geographically and linguistically, is an almost parodic version of Foucault's famous exegesis of classification norms in Western systems of knowledge.¹⁷ The "factic" nature of the language connection established the purported link of former colonies to French culture; but other "facts" were dismissed, such as opposition to colonialism and racial strife. In Togo, a country usually classified as *Francophone*, resistance to French presence, colonial policies, and the imposition of the French language was so strong when France and Great Britain seized the territory from the Germans in 1914 that there was actually an active pro-German movement, an embarrassing detail of colonial history not mentioned in official versions. The opposition continued for decades, as student movements in 1991 issued statements rejecting "imperialist and neocolonialist" relations with France and *Francophonie*, and calling on people to "divest [themselves] of French paternalism, for Togo never has been a French colony."¹⁸

NEOCOLONIALISM AND EMERGING DISCOURSES OF FRANCOPHONE STUDIES

Muddled neocolonial discourses abound in texts using such linguistic classification systems. For instance, the authors of a pamphlet on the "Francophone challenge" organize the *Francophone* countries of the world according to a grid based on the connection of other languages to French. The Caribbean countries are described as close to French, most of Africa as speaking languages "more distant" from French, and Arab cultures as "very distant."¹⁹ This peculiar set of linguistic criteria obliterates the radical differences of these linguistic families, puts all African languages, however diverse, into one category defined in relation to French, and maintains the French language as center and standard. Even more objectionable is a work entitled *1989. Vers une révolution Francophone?* in which the various speakers of *Francophonie* are classified as the "Francofaune," and are divided into "Francophones, francophonoïdes, and franco-aphones."²⁰ It would be hard to find

17. In Michel Foucault's foundational *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, (New York: Vintage, 1994) [1971], see chapters 5 and 10.

18. Comi M. Toulabor, "Problèmes de frontières, francophobie et nationalisme au Togo," *LiMes*, 169–76.

19. P.-F. Chatton and Jeanne Mazuryk Bapst, *Le défi francophone* (Brussels: Beuylant/Paris: LGDJ, 1991), 8–9.

20. Robert Chaudenson, *1989. Vers une révolution francophone!* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), 41–66.

a more convincing illustration of postcolonial theory's charge that the "other" (even, in this case, the purportedly culturally close and allied Other) is silenced through zoological, entomological, and/or botanical classification grids and implicitly removed from full membership in humanity.²¹

Thus the term *Francophone* is used in this essay with a great deal of discomfort, as a term fraught with ambiguities and complicities. It conceals the sinister underside of a French-speaking world no less innocent of imperialism than its English-speaking counterpart (how did parts of Africa "get French" and can they remain so?), and, as well, it is a problematic scripting of postcolonial realities, such as the role of France as a world power in countries like Chad²² and Rwanda. Behind the term lurk elements of the "Francophone" idiom that contribute to generate and maintain geopolitical renamings and remappings of territories conquered and controlled (Indochina, French Equatorial Africa, Central Africa, etc). They have also veiled the excess of meaning that now has been heaped on apparently simple French words, such as *civilisation*, *progrès*, or *citoyen*. In view of all these ambiguities, Jean-Marc Moura's reminder of a distinction to be made between *Francophonie* as a state of linguistic fact and *francophonisme* as a discourse about cultural hegemony and a will to power is particularly useful (2).

These questions do obtain in the U.S. context, but both their importance and their solutions shift a bit. Before the 1970s, when the academy largely gave no place to Francophone literature in its French curriculum, or reluctantly admitted only such figures as Césaire or Senghor, the term implicitly evoked things non-Western and hence threatening to canonical French literature. This announced conflicts about territory and resources that remain with us today. Proponents of Francophone literature may not always recognize that at stake was a sort of "unbearable whiteness of being." The whiteness of the canon screamed for interrogation and resistance, paving the way for its current deconstructions as a category by scholars and critics, primarily African-American, and the elaboration of a new "race theory."²³ French

21. See V.-Y. Mudimbé, "Symbols and the Interpretation of the African Past," *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1–37.

22. [collective: Agir ici et Survie] *Dossiers noirs de la politique africaine de la France* no. 8, *Tchad, Niger. Escroqueries à la démocratie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996).

23. See for instance Kimberlé Crenshaw et al., ed., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: New Press, 1995), and Wahneema Lubiano, ed., *The House that Race Built* (New York: Random-Vintage, 1998).

hexagonal (and European) literature was also perceived as conservative, cut-off from contemporary strife and issues, and in need of a kind of "regeneration" that Francophone literature provided. Such a perspective, however, teetered dangerously at the edge of less noble responses to the literature and culture of the perceived "Other." "Regenerating" smacks of the Western colonial view of Africa's cultural role as providing a return to unspoiled original sources, to landscapes and sensations lost by the industrialized world.²⁴ Such a desire for an "eternal Africa" has been roundly condemned by African intellectuals and policy-makers who have adamantly rejected atavistic policies that amount to neglecting or refusing the economic and technological development of Africa for its own people.²⁵

Interest in the literatures of the *Francophone* world has indeed shot up considerably in the last decade, and the reasons are varied. As Christopher Miller remarks, "within French departments in U.S. colleges and universities, it has become an indispensable, if not wholly understood, component of the curriculum" (1). But Orientalism is still afoot in the Academy: the wide attraction of Tahar Ben Jelloun's novels—while his politically engaged poetry²⁶ remains almost unstudied—and their ulterior treatment in film, may be one indication of that. The contemporary academic publishing world has also been "discovering" the emergent voices of the colonized, marginalized, and ostracized—former colonial people, people of color, lesbians, and gays—in ways that mix commercial and professional benefits with genuine intellectual interest. Francophone studies, as they still struggle for full recognition—in particular for financial parity—are at times the site of opportunistic career strategies from which the specters of colonialism have not been dispelled. Today we witness a contradiction between continued resistance to the term and the field on the one hand and empty endorsements of *Francophonie* by the academic establishment that confer to

24. On this subject see a collection of acerbic essays by François de Negroni, *Afrique fantasmés* (Paris: Plon, 1992), and his pamphlet on French *coopérants* entitled *Les colonies de vacances*.

25. See Callisto Madavo and Jean-Louis Sarbib, "L'Afrique en marche. Attirer le capital privé vers un continent en évolution," *LiMes*, 33–46; on women, technology, and survival, *African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Gwendolyn Mikell, ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); on the questions of African museums, technology, and African agency, see Peter R. Schmidt and Roderick J. McIntosh, ed., *Plundering Africa's Past*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

26. Tahar Ben Jelloun, *Les amandiers sont morts de leurs blessures* followed by *Cicatrices du soleil et Le discours du Chameau* (Paris: Maspéro, 1976).

both banal currency on the other. And when faculty or graduate students not trained in any of its areas anoint themselves specialists, such attitudes betray the old topos of "uncharted territory." Considered unclaimed and uninhabited, such territory is thus open for occupation and appropriation, a form of neocolonization through discourse. Yet, such a simple characterization of the situation of Francophone studies in U.S. universities and colleges would be unfair: the *Francophone* wave has also allowed French departments to diversify to a tiny extent, with the result that an ethnic and racial pluralism has begun to make its mark, though barely. Maintenance of the field as separate can be a form of exclusion but also a protection of sorts, a guarantee that non-Western and non-hexagonal works in French will not be shortchanged, absorbed, or made to disappear in mysterious ways.

Until very recently, the important theories of Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze, which in turn inform thinkers such as Homi Bhabha, Judith Butler, and Gayatri Spivak, had become marginalized and suspect in their country of origin. In the U.S., postcolonial theory, postmodernism, gender theory,²⁷ as well as the frequent ideological debates about political morality and the catch-all accusation of so-called "political correctness" create a kind of intellectual turmoil unknown in France. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "rich stew"²⁸ seems far removed from the more ponderous, detached, and authoritative discourse of the French academy, grounded in linguistics, sociology, and political economy. But such a facile contrast would be, again, quite superficial: writers and scholars have moved from France and "Francophone" countries to the precincts of U.S. academe with ease, transposing one set of discourses to another environment²⁹ and blending both in an original type

27. For instance, Françoise Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Andrea Benton Rushing, ed., *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora: A Reader* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1996); Aiah K. Ndomaina, "Repetition, Resistance and Renewal: Postmodern and Postcolonial Narrative Strategies in Selected Francophone African Novels" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1998); Keith L. Walker, *Countermodernism and Francophone Literary Culture: The Game of Slipknot* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Jarrod Hayes, *Queer Nations: Marginal Sexualities in the Maghreb* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

28. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), "a rich stew of male algolagnia, child-love, and autoeroticism" (8).

29. See Franco/phone-American efforts in Claude Bouygués, ed., *Texte africain et voies-voix critiques. Essais sur les littératures africaines et antillaises de graphie française: Maghreb, Afrique noire, Antilles, immigration = African Text and Critical Voices-Approaches: Essays on African and West Indian Literatures of French Expres-*

of thought. Such has been the role, to mention only some scholars and thinkers who are also world-renowned writers, of Maryse Condé at Columbia, Assia Djebar at LSU, Edouard Glissant at CUNY, and Vumbi Yoka Mudimbé at Stanford, among others.

FRENCH, ENGLISH, AND LINGUISTIC "CROSSING ZONES"

French outcry against the ever-encroaching culture of the United States and the English language is another zone of difference between the construction of *Francophone* studies in the two countries. Indeed, in 1986, the Paris Francophone Summit marked a new turn in the field: organized political resistance to Anglophone hegemony, a will to turn the tide of the inexorable rise of English worldwide, and the desire to launch a "Francophone challenge" on the stage of world politics and economics. Yet the term now reflects the internal tensions that complicate and split it. For instance, in 1987 a small volume entitled *La deriva delle francofonie*³⁰ broached this very topic in its preface and declared itself the first publication to reformulate definitions by using the word in the plural. Though unitary and centralizing at its beginnings, it stated, the concept of *Francophonie* was moving to greater recognition of the "various socio-cultural and literary individualities it might apply to." In fact, the word *francophonies* had appeared by 1985, but in a limited sense.³¹

The rivalry between French and English creates a binary opposition that is deceiving, since many languages can be inscribed in the same cultural space as the one occupied by French in a given work. Lise Gauvin speaks of writers who have chosen to write in French, but nevertheless labor in a sort of crossing zone between languages ("œuvrent à la *croisée des langues* . . ."). Their works reflect a linguistic "hyper-consciousness" born of the many contacts with other languages.³² And

sion: *Maghreb, Black Africa, West Indies, Immigration*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992); Laila Ibnlfassi and Nicki Hitchcott, ed., *African Francophone Writing: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Berg, 1996); P. Little and Roger Little, ed., *Black Accents: Writing in French from Africa, Mauritius and the Caribbean* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1997).

30. Franca Marcato Falzoni, ed., *La deriva delle francofonie 3. Animisme et technologie dans la littérature francophone* (Bologna: Editrice CLUEB, 1989).

31. Doukoure Abdoul Dukule, "Afrique-Québec. Deux francophonies," *Présence francophone* 26 (1985): 45–56. Between 1987 and 2000, its most frequent occurrences were still in the title of a journal, *Francophonies d'Amérique*.

32. Lise Gauvin, "L'imaginaire des langues. Tracées d'une poétique," in Jacques

in poignant pages Assia Djebar has given voice to the various competing and coexisting languages that live in her, as in other women of her world, who "possess" four languages: that of the rocks, the original Berber; the language of the Book, Arabic with its dialectal sister; the language of the former masters, French; and finally, the language of the body.³³ The professional use of French may displace mastery of the original language, as was the case until recently in parts of the Arab world, creating for many a tragic absence in the daily experience of Arab identity. The term "Francophone" is mired in complex experiences of linguistic and societal practice in which national and individual contexts play major roles. In this interlocking network, geographical and cultural proximity to the French language contributes to the linguistic conundrum. In the U.S. those who are either expatriates or exiled but continue to write in French face a new possibility, that of "inhabiting" yet another "foreign" language, English.

Until recently, the most widely-read Francophone author in the United States, apart from Aimé Césaire, was probably Camara Laye whose book *L'enfant noir* was translated into English in the United States in the early 1950s.³⁴ Since then it has been assigned even in high schools in the United States. It is ironic that a fellow Guinean, Amadou Diallo, became the figure from a country labeled *Francophone* to be known to the general public in the United States in 2000, a position he owed to the configuration of race and power in the United States rather than to any "Francophonie."³⁵ As with the case of a Haitian immigrant,

Chevrier, ed., *Poétiques d'Édouard Glissant*, Actes du colloque international "Poétiques d'Édouard Glissant," Paris-Sorbonne, 11–13 March 1998 (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1993), 275–84; 276. See also Lise Gauvin, *L'écrivain francophone à la croisée des langues* (Paris: Karthala, 1997).

33. Assia Djebar, *Ces voix qui m'assiègent*. *En marge de ma francophonie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999), 13–14. See also her March 1996 text "Les yeux de la langue," in *Poétiques d'Édouard Glissant*, 363–65.

34. Camara Laye, *The Dark Child*; with an introduction by Philippe Thoby-Marcellin; trans. James Kirkup and Ernest Jones (New York: Noonday Press, 1954); and *The Dark Child*, trans. James Kirkup, with an introduction by William Plomer (London: Collins, 1955). On those translations and their problems, see Eloise Brière, "In Search of Cultural Equivalencies: Translations of Camara Laye's *L'enfant noir*," *Translation Review* 27 (1988): 34–39; Fredric Michelman, "From l'Enfant noir to the Dark Child: The Drumbeat of Words Silenced," in Samuel A. Johnson, Bernadette Cailler et al., ed., *Toward Defining the African Aesthetic* (Washington, DC: Three Continents, 1982), 105–11.

35. Amadou Diallo was an immigrant from Guinea living in New York City who was gunned down by members of a special plain-clothes police squad because he looked like a suspect they were seeking.

Abner Louima, held and tortured by New York City police officers, citizens of countries from the “Francophone” world are entering the vortex of police violence in the United States. The attacks on Amadou Diallo and Abner Louima, members of communities living as separate immigrant groups, quasi invisible to the mainstream, associated them with a wider community contoured by color and the exclusions pinned on it by structures of racial discrimination in the United States. Thus, both reflect the new place of immigrants from the Francophone world in U.S. life, not through the rich content of Francophone cultures triumphantly riding in with the surf, but by virtue of being black in a country where police culture is experienced daily as hostile to blacks. In their new “home,” the matter-of-factness of being black in their land of origin has become the racial “fact” of blackness that intersects in sudden, brutal ways with their status as immigrants and people from poor neighborhoods. Both the exoneration of Amadou Diallo’s executioners and the condemnation of Abner Louima’s torturers—guilty in particular of sexual assault—dramatically engulf immigrants from different cultural horizons in United States views of race and sexuality. As the East Coast of the United States becomes a second Francophone population hub, it is increasingly problematic to study the Francophone literatures of Africa and the Caribbean in the United States without reflecting on this changing cultural horizon. The latter comprises a Haitian community rising in numbers but curtailed by hostile immigration and political asylum policies, fleeing the daily political violence and economic hardship of their country, and bringing with them memories of murder, terror, and political strife. The impact of migrations on cultural environments leaves such traces of memory that literature harbors and transmits. The great urban centers of the West have been put in direct contact with those of the developing world following new cultural axes linking Paris, New York, Montreal, Dakar, and Port-au-Prince.³⁶ And ironically again, it is the very subaltern status of racial minorities in the United States that has made the study of Francophone literature more desirable in local academic contexts. All in all, in the United States cultural and political context, Francophone literatures and cultures can simply no longer have outsider status.

36. Collective reflection and conversation with my colleagues at the City University of New York Graduate Center, Édouard Glissant, Lucienne Serrano, and Thomas Spear have been most helpful in inspiring this essay.

"Francophone," both as a term and a concept, has further challenges to meet. The etymology of the word should refer more properly to language spoken and heard, not written, although what we study is precisely the written word. Further, French is spoken by a minority in each purportedly "Francophone" country and written by fewer still. So the question remains of how to recognize the *sounds* that echo behind the written words of the Francophone text. And these sounds are not merely the *words* in the particular linguistic crossings and stews at work but the cultural sounds in their rich, ethnically and socially diverse, conflictual, muted, and insistent forms.

"SOUNDING" AND FRANCOPHONE TEXTS

That hidden part of the Francophone text can be accessed through an illuminating critical concept coined by a leading scholar of African American literature and culture, Houston Baker Jr., in his discussion of the Harlem Renaissance and modernity. He proposes that a variety of texts and performances by African Americans, regardless of their sometimes apparent acceptance of hegemonic views of race and of being black, encode another dimension that is authentically black and protected through internal references that do not voice African American culture but *sound* it.³⁷ This important theoretical tool is very relevant to the subject preoccupying us here. Francophone African writers also "sounded" Africa in texts that seemed otherwise complacent toward colonialism. Later, Francophone voices inscribed themselves in a more or less welcoming, at times hostile, hegemonic cultural environment on both sides of the Atlantic; gradually they have made themselves known and desirable but not yet at home.

In its relationship to English, Francophone literature cannot be reduced to a wall of last defense against linguistic encroachment. The primacy of French does not mean that it turns its back on other linguistic expressions. Further, the *sounds* of Francophone writing were heard in North American culture, particularly literary culture, quite early. Of special significance to the Franco/American dimensions of *Francophonie* is a literary work written in the United States, one of the earlier black Francophone texts of the Americas. This is an anthology of eighty-four poems in French, for the most part love poems, by seven-

37. Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 25–69.

teen New Orleans poets, well-to-do free people of color (*gens de couleur libres*), known under the collective name *Les Cenelles*, and published in New Orleans in 1845 by poet and educator Armand Lanusse (1812–1867). This group had “a unique cultural life distinct from that of whites on the one hand and slaves on the other,” and included merchants, writers, a journalist like Joanni Questy who wrote for the militant *La tribune de la Nouvelle Orléans*, or the successful playwright Victor Séjour, who had a career in Paris. The work, modeled on French romanticism, has seemed conventional to some; however, closer readings of its themes of disillusionment and death have elicited more serious echoes, reflecting “imposed limitations and thwarted ambitions” as well as a “deep cultural orientation towards France.”³⁸

During the Harlem Renaissance, the work of one writer in particular embodied the complex ties between North America and French socio-cultural environments thereby relativizing linguistic identity. Claude McKay, an important albeit marginalized Harlem Renaissance author who left his native Jamaica to become a major African American voice, “sounded” in such famous poems as “If We Must Die,” a militant and dignified call to resistance embraced by a black community under siege by racist rioters. McKay wrote his novel *Banjo* in English about the very subject of *Francophonie*, and the work was translated immediately into French.³⁹ The novel concerns the lives and drifting futures of a large group of black men—and a woman of mixed South Asian parentage—from all over the Francophone world and several English-speaking countries as well. Their use of French as an idiom of cultural communication is contrasted to a desired pandiasporic idiom of black identity. French words, references to French press articles and to French song, as well as debates over Lamine Senghor’s platform, all provide a rich texture to this work and create a new category of text, one that might be termed not *Francophone* but “francophonic.” “Francophonic” might incorporate Houston Baker’s concept of *sounding* to

38. Philip Barnard, “Les Cenelles,” in *Oxford Companion to African American Literature*, ed. William L. Andrews, Frances Smith Foster, and Trudier Harris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 121–22. See also: Alfred J. Guillaume, Jr., “Love, Death, and Faith in the New Orleans Poets of Color,” *The Southern Quarterly*, 20/2 (Winter 1982): 126–44; Floyd D. Cheung, “Les Cenelles and Quadroon Balls: Hidden Transcripts of Resistance and Domination in New Orleans, 1803–1845,” *Southern Literary Journal*, 29/2 (1997): 5–16.

39. Claude McKay, *Banjo: A Story without a Plot* (New York: Harper, 1929); *Banjo*, traduit de l’américain par Ida Treat et Paul Vaillant-Couturier, avec une préface de Georges Friedmann. (Paris: Éditions Rieder, 1931).

designate a text in which the linguistic vector itself is less important than the presence of sound, music, and song, of hearing and speaking French in displaced, disjuncted cultural contexts as experienced here by the various protagonists of McKay's novel.⁴⁰

Francophone African writers have also incorporated references to the United States and used English as participants in a cross-Atlantic conversation with agency and control on their side, echoing on another plane another trans-Atlantic passage, this one mired in violence and abduction. In Zegoua Gbessi Nokan's hybrid text, *Le soleil point noir*, a letter written by a young woman to her lover repeatedly uses the English "my darkness" as a form of affective and erotic endearment as well as political interpellation, marking the discursive limits of French which has no equivalent term.⁴¹ Allusions to writing in English bring out conflicts in the construction of identity around nation and gender, as in Abdourahman Waberi's "Une affaire à vivre." In this soliloquy, a woman ponders her own history of exclusion, control, discrimination, and resistance; impugned for having read Betty Friedan, Angela Davis, and Angela Carter, along with Beauvoir and "the Algerian Assia Djebar" and responded to these "foreign names," she stakes her right to read texts about women her own way.⁴²

The United States and the city of New York have figured in works of African literature in French as emblematic of a black history of suffering. Bernard Dadié's 1963 poem "Harlem" depicts Harlem as a crucible of relentless oppression: "a new Golgotha . . . an island of shipwreck victims . . . a zoo for tourists . . . manor house of Death . . ." ⁴³ In another poem, Dadié views Harlem as a forlorn place ("cotton field for Wall Street") but inserts a more resistant note, concluding that, with the sun, "Harlem casts off its coat of subjection and takes back its dreams."⁴⁴ David Diop denounced racial oppression in the United

40. On McKay's work, see A. L. McLeod, ed., *Claude McKay: Centennial Studies* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1992); Tyrone Tillery, *Claude McKay: A Black Poet's Struggle for Identity* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992); Heather Hathaway, *Caribbean Waves: Relocating Claude McKay and Paule Marshall* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); and Miller, 21–23.

41. Zegoua Gbessi Nokan, *Le soleil point noir* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1962).

42. Abdourahman Waberi, "Une affaire à vivre," *Cahier nomade. Nouvelles*. (Paris: Le Serpent à Plumes, 1996), 49–57.

43. Bernard Dadié, "Harlem," *Hommes de tous les continents* (Abidjan: CEDA, 1985; 1967): "un nouveau Golgotha . . . une île de naufragés . . . un zoo pour touristes . . . hôtel particulier pour la Mort."

44. Dadié, "Jour sur Harlem," also dated 1963. Also, in the same volume, "Jésus se repose à New-Orléans (sic)," which ends on a vision of segregation abolished.

States, in his poem "À un enfant noir," an elegy for the murdered Emmett Till.⁴⁵ In Jean-Baptiste Tati-Loutard's poem "Lettre à une fille de New York," ambiguous allusions to Harlem are incorporated in an evocation of Africa: "I have all your features at the tip of my pen / And your words also, truly brilliant: / 'Harlem is Night inhabited by nights'."⁴⁶ Among these traces, one work stands out as the inverted reflection of McKay's: this is a novel by Lamine Diakhaté (1928–87), *Chalys d'Harlem*, the story of a Senegalese sailor from Rufisque who moves to the United States in 1919. Chalys tells his life story to a countryman, after living forty years as a black American in Harlem. He goes back to Senegal for a visit, only to realize how deep the gulf has become between him and his original culture.⁴⁷

African-American music has occupied other foundational textual positions in the work of Emmanuel Boundzeki Dongala and Mongo Beti. Dongala's *Jazz et vin de palme* (1982), a work with a deliberately cross-cultural title, is intertwined with U.S. black culture in an inspired homage to John Coltrane, with whom Dongala shared a distinctive aesthetic vision and whom the writer envisioned as a teacher and a leader. In the section entitled "A Love Supreme," Dongala reacts with eloquent pain to the news of Coltrane's death. The narrator speaks of seeking identity and unanswered questions in different types of black music, "the deep and sorrowful soul of Billie Holiday and Ma Rainey," or "the jaunty and lusty rhythms of Fats Waller or Willie Smith the Lion." This music is a "museum" containing "a part of our people's history," but also a dead end.⁴⁸ The complex interactions of French and English in the context of defining black identity—African and African American—are reflected by the narrator's eulogy to Coltrane written directly in English, followed by only a partial translation into French. After the narrator has removed the words "his people" from the eulogy because they have lost meaning, he steps out in the blazing sun, right into a confrontation between the community and the police: "a thirteen-year old black youth had just been killed by a white police officer who was invoking self defense to a crowd of hostile black people."⁴⁹

45. David Diop, *Coups de pilon* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1973), 24–26.

46. Jean-Baptiste Tati-Loutard, *Les normes du temps* (Kinshasa: Mont noir, 1974).

47. Lamine Diakhaté, *Chalys d'Harlem* (Dakar: NEA, 1978).

48. Emmanuel Boundzeki Dongala, "A Love Supreme," in *Jazz et vin de palme* (Paris: Hatier/Monde noir, 1982), 175–206.

49. He writes: "When the time comes, / May he rise again in the glory / Of his luminous sound / To be the teacher of us all / And let his supreme vibrations show the way

The “luminous sound” Dongala speaks of, produced and embodied by Coltrane, is at once music and much more, a textual matrix and mediator of cultural passage. It is also a truly *resounding* answer to a history in which that culture had been made subaltern and muffled, turning silence and constraint into a thing of beauty.

The “sounding” of African-American culture was starkly rendered as well in Mongo Beti’s 2000 novel, *Branle-bas en blanc et noir*.⁵⁰ This is a parodic detective story starring a cast of characters with ambiguous professional and political identities, including the main protagonist, Eddie, a lawyer or private eye with ambiguous political contacts, and his friend George the “toubab,” the “only Frenchman he can stand,” adventurer, seducer of young girls, and unpredictable ally. The novel is really about the impact of economic globalization on contemporary West Africa, conveyed through an unnamed but recognizable Cameroon, and the breaking down of artificially constructed national identities, which are meaningless in the kind of multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic societies that nations purport to encapsulate. While French is the vernacular of the novel, it is subverted by an “African French” with its own linguistic contours, and it must coexist with African languages, as well as with English. The latter is presented through an Anglophone character (264), standing in for an actual Anglophone minority in Cameroon, multiple allusions to neocolonialism and imperialism, through the IMF (205), or the consumption of foreign alcohol. But it is music, the distinctly African-American sound of jazz (Eddie has played in a jazz club, 201) and the blues (he repeatedly listens to a particular record, a duo by Billie Holiday and Lester Young [290, 351]), that give the novel a distinctive voice of black identity, transcending the farcical and parodic modes. The “musical tracks” in the novel provide a particularly effective form of sounding, because it is the resistant quality of a song like Billie Holiday’s “Strange Fruit” that is encoded in a passage presenting a disconcerting caricatural fantasy on the inception of the blues in the American South (335). The song refers to a lynching, but the singer associated it with the death of her own father, who died of illness under the Jim Crow system, after being turned away from several hospitals.⁵¹ In Mongo Beti’s novel, it is through the

/ To us, / The living. / And may his people for whom he sang / Rise up with him.” It is the last two verses that are erased (Dongala, 205–206).

50. Mongo Beti, *Branle-bas en blanc et noir* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000).

51. See James Baldwin, “Where the Grapes of Wrath Are Stored” (*The Devil Finds*

blues, or the jazz-blues duo, that meaning is recovered and that resistant discourse reinscribes itself in a neocolonial society marred by corruption from top to bottom. Paradoxically, it is through the sounding of black American culture and its oppositional voice that a new authentic position of identity can be reclaimed by this beleaguered African society. These examples of the concept of sounding are potentially rich, but should not obscure the fact that literature is not the only cultural space that allows this particular form of voicing to take place.

LINGUISTIC CROSSINGS AND THE "OTHER" FRANCOPHONIE: HIP-HOP (INTER)NATION

Contemporary France is no longer a cultural hegemony but a series of competing cultural sites that render questionable a vocabulary of mere addition with terms such as *France plurielle* or *Francophonie*. Translations of foreign literature, theatrical experiments with cultural fusion, countless international film festivals from all over the world, and the many venues for traditional musical expression, are all reflections of a new "world culture" marketed in France. But nowhere are these relations and contradictions more obvious than in the world of music crafted by a multi-ethnic youth culture that is a messenger for and witness to community healing and community strife. This music is principally French rap, which entertains special relations with world music in France, both new forms of an unrecognized "Francophone" expression. In defining the contours of Francophone studies, French rap is an important element for it is first and foremost textual, even if musical arrangements are often quite innovative. France is now the second hip-hop nation of the world, with close to a thousand different rap groups, some of whom have not yet recorded.⁵² It produces a vast musical culture that nets millions of dollars in profits and mixes world, rap, reggae, and r/b with rai, chaabi, and still other forms such as flamenco. It uses the French language as a medium, mixed with Arabic, Berber, various African languages, Spanish, Marseilles dialect, English,

Work [1976, New York: Dell, 1990], 120–37], on the passages in Billie Holliday's memoirs in which she describes her father—an army veteran with ruined lungs—and his ordeal as he was turned away from hospital after hospital in Dallas, Texas. She added "A song was born which became my personal protest—'Strange Fruit'— . . ." (Baldwin 132).

52. See the website multimania.com/hiphophombattack/Le_Repertoire. The entry claims that there are several thousand rap groups operating in France, many of them known only to their friends and family, and many of them underground.

and soon, probably, South Asian rhythms already imbedded in the culture of the Caribbean.⁵³

Far from being a mere Western commercial invention, world music originated with African artists, whose contributions have been and still too often are overshadowed by larger commercial interests. In their work, multilinguism, polyglossia, interweavings of different linguistic traditions and practices were distinctive features. In 1970s Paris, the world-renowned artist Toure Kunda performed at the beginning of his career, concocting a type of afro-jazz-rock. Ray Lema, a towering figure in African music, used Douala, Swahili, Lingala, Kikongo, and Mango, combining the influences of his native Zaire with jazz, Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles, Mozart, and Bach. The tradition is kept up by contemporaries such as Toups Bebey, a Cameroonian born in Paris, whose group Paris Africans mixes instruments, styles, and nationalities. As well, Sita Lantaa, led by the Centrafrican Maixent Landou, which began in 1992, mixes French, Lingala, Kikongo, Dioula, and Wolof, performing a Congo-Zairian rumba with Western influences. Rai constantly produces new artists who also blend their musical genres with chaabi, gnawa, reggae, and rap.⁵⁴ Based in Grenoble, the Franco-Algerian fusion group Gnawa Diffusion is led by the son of Kateb Yacine, Amazigh, an iconoclast and virulent political satirist who lambastes political adversaries in France and his native Algeria. Playfulness and transgression are present in the name of the group ONB, "Orchestre National de Barbès," which mixes rai and Chaabi in front of packed audiences. Multiple criss-crossings of language and culture are effectuated as well by rap artists who mix a discordant chorus of voices speaking in their own languages as well as French with a variety of accents, and provide entire sets of such "speech performances," or in the economy of a particular album, performative speech acts.⁵⁵ Examples are the piece called "Jackpotes" by the group 113,⁵⁶ or several songs from the older group, Massilia Sound System.⁵⁷

53. "Guadeloupe Kali Ceremony," *East Indian Music in the West Indies*, The Alan Lomax Collection, Caribbean Voyage: the 1962 Field Recordings (Cambridge, MA: Rounder Records, 1999).

54. See Joan Gross, David McMurray, and Ted Swedenburg, "Arab Noise and Ramadan Nights: Rai, Rap and Franco-Maghreb Identity," *Diaspora* 3/1 (Spring 1994): 3–39.

55. I use the term in an analogy with Sedgwick's analysis of the closet, that is "initiated by the speech act of a silence," a silence "that accrues . . . in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it" (Sedgwick, 3).

56. 113, *Les princes de la ville* (np: Alariana, 1999).

57. Massilia Sound System, *Commando Fada* ([Marseilles]: Ròker Promocion, Shaman, 1995).

Manu Dibango and his Wakafrica plunged into their own roots through an exploration of black American music and its political discourses of resistance to racism in the 1960s. This revelation took place when he arrived in Los Angeles in 1969, discovering the political movement of the Black Panthers. He brought back this awareness and a new-found genealogy of resistance to a France in which resistant discourses about blackness, Fanon notwithstanding, were still barely known. And in another significant genealogy, the reverse journey had been made by James Baldwin, who first moved to France to get away from racism in the United States. Then, tired of sitting in Paris discussing the Algerian War, he returned home when the first Civil Rights Movement and the torches of the Black Liberation Movement lit up the streets: in 1963, Baldwin was in Selma, participating in the voting drive among black Americans. Today, young people in working-class neighborhoods of France, whether black, Beur, or white have reinterpreted and retooled a musical culture of African-American origin to make it their own, inflecting it in decisively French and "Francophone" ways. They have gradually but firmly moved away from borrowings of English phrases and sentences to a more distinctly French vernacular.⁵⁸

For many people in France, U.S. imperialism is manifest in the constant flow of music, cinema, food habits, and language emanating from the "barbarian" United States. The efforts of Chirac's government to stymie the *mainmise* of English on French culture, by demanding that a minimum of 30% of songs played on air waves be in French, have paradoxically favored singers who incorporate their own musical heritage with forms from the United States and the use of French. Thus the young public of French working-class suburbs militantly endorses a certain type of American culture, through the rediscovery of black roots and black American music, reinterpreted in the crucible of

58. On the one hand, moving away from English to French represents a closer tie to urban youth communities. On the other, being able to take advantage of French laws on 30% French content on airwaves generates a proliferation of groups, not all of them thought to be authentic by urban youth, especially project audiences. French communities of rap listeners resist academic conclusions on the subject as often based on incomplete and inauthentic information, but accept a magazine like *L'Affiche. Le Magazine des autres musiques* (Clichy). How much *respect* researchers show for the performers and communities they write about is a strong issue. For these insights, as well as musical documents, and information unavailable in printed sources, I want to thank a graduate student from Paris on exchange at the CUNY Graduate Center in 1999–2000, Maboula Soumahoro. For other comments, I also thank my graduate students in my Spring 2000 "Constructions d'Afriques" course, especially Sophie Saint-Just, Anna Lerus, and Rosa Attali.

French urban, marginalized life.⁵⁹ This music is sometimes rerouted to the African continent, as is the case with groups like the Ghetto Blasters, Senegalese rap artists,⁶⁰ and now the growing movement of Algerian rappers singing in Arabic such as the women rappers of Hyphen and the better known Intik or Le Micro Brise le Silence. As well, many of the leading French rap artists were in fact either born in Africa or are sons and daughters of African immigrants: MC Solaar was born in Senegal; the Bamileke woman rapper Bams comes from Cameroon; Khery, lead singer for the militant group Ideal J., is from the Ivory Coast; Stomy Bugsy of Ministère Amer is Cape Verdian. French rap has also woven into its lyrics some of the barely visible strands of French multi-ethnic culture. The Italo-French rap artist Akhetanon (Philippe Fragione) sings about the history of Southern Italy, and intersperses fragments of Sicilian and Neapolitan on his tracks, as well as the songs of an Arab/Beur-inflected group like Fonky Family. Marseilles groups anchored in local hybrid culture also provide similar cross-cultural soundings, such as IAM, Massilia Sound System or Fonky Family. The latter's lyrics refer freely to the Koran, combining religious allusions with violent exhortations against capitalism and a racialized society. Other groups and solo artists of Maghrebi descent also sing on specifically religious Muslim themes, like K-Rhyme le Roi ("La Qibla," on the *Comme un Aimant* musical track, see below) or the group Umma.

Rap music's arrival on French shores can actually be dated precisely: in 1982 the massive impact of U.S. rap music identified with the Bronx and the legendary Afrika Bambaata group was transmitted to young black people from the most recent immigration wave.⁶¹ The rapper

59. See V. Milliot, "Le Rap. Une parole rendue inaudible par le bavardage des stéréotypes: Expressions culturelles dans les quartiers," *Migrants Formation* 111 (1997): 61–73; Christian Béthune, "Made in France," *Autrement* 189 (1999): 179–206.

60. In Dakar alone, there are now hundreds of rap groups, working in very limited conditions, without recording materials, and singing in linguistic polyphonies of English, French, and Wolof. The successful ones have an almost heroic status, such as Positive Black Soul and Daara J (Lord Aladji Man, Faada-Freddy, Ndongo D). The latter sings on themes such as slavery, including talks by the director of the Gorée House of Slaves put to music. "Daara J: Xalima," *Webdo-L'hebdo* 9, 4 March 1999, Disques, Xalima (www.webdo.ch/hebdo/hebdo_1999).

61. See André Prevos, "Une nouvelle forme d'expression populaire en France. Le cas de la musique Rap dans les années 1980," *Francographies* (1993): 201–16; "Création, transformation, américanisation. Le Rap français des années 90," *Francographies* 2 (1995): 179–209; "The Evolution of French Rap Music: Hip Hop Culture in the 1980s and 1990s," *French Review*, 69/5 (1996): 713–25; "Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in France during the 1980s and 1990s: Developments and Reactions," *European Studies Journal*

Solo, from the group Assassins, commented: "It was the devil's music, the sound that heated up my shoulders and my feet."⁶² In the United States, decades earlier, this devil's music was the blues at its inception. In the now thriving French hip-hop culture, alienated urban youth communities continue to identify with their place of origin, Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Grenoble, Strasbourg, Toulon, as well as the suburbs of Paris, Sarcelles, Créteil, and Vitry. They generate a rich "folk culture" of the disenfranchized in which race, unemployment, police violence, and dignity are major themes, along with friendship, love, and sex, that can only be acknowledged briefly here. Ideal J. is one of the most militant, with songs like "Hardcore" and "R.A.S. 1" in which he refuses to serve in the French army ("there is already a war in my neighborhood"). The album is packaged with a cover image of the French flag crumpled in a strong black hand on one side, and, on the other, an ambiguous image of a strong, unclad black man draped in the same flag, but devoid of white in it, like a bare-shouldered ballroom dress.⁶³ Faouzi Tarkhani, a blind Maghrebi solo artist, identifies himself as a pious Muslim opposed to violence, but he is also extremely political ("Le noir me met à l'abri," "Un mike est une arme," "Reste Love"), and includes a strong woman rapper like Casey Marcko on one of his tracks ("Dois-je me taire").⁶⁴ Bams, one of only a few women rappers, is one of the most forceful new voices with strong, explicit, and angry lyrics about race and gender, the status of women in relations with men, and social marginalization.⁶⁵ In the virulent lyrics of *Ministère Amer*, the *Francophone* concept of Négritude is derided ("Pas venu en touriste"); the group also can claim fame for its serious legal troubles when it was charged with inciting anti-police violence.⁶⁶

15/2 (Fall 1998): 1–33; "Communication through Popular Music in the Twenty-First Century? The Example of French Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture," in Jesse Levitt, Leonard R. N. Ashley, and Wayne H. Finke, ed., *Language and Communication in the New Century* (New York: Cummings and Hathaway, 1998), 137–48.

62. "1982–1990. Le Rap débarque en France," France Culture, *L'histoire en direct*, Emmanuel Laurentin and Christine Robert, 5 July and 7 July 1999.

63. Ideal J., *Le combat continue* (n.p.: Alariana, Barclay, 1998).

64. Faouzi Tarkhani, *Guerrier pour la paix* (n.p.: Polygram, Jazz Dean, 1999). He is the main Maghrebi artist played on the music program of Radio Shams (Radio Soleil), a predominantly Maghrebi station in Paris (88.6 FM).

65. Bams, *Vivre ou mourir* (n.p.: Trema, Sony: 1999).

66. *Ministère Amer* [Stomy Bussy and Passi], *95200* ([Paris]: Hostile, Delabel, Sarcelite: 1994).

Akhenaton, both solo performer and organizer of collective efforts, member of the Marseilles group IAM, hails from Sicily via Naples. A working-class immigrant who became French while claiming proudly the label *métèque* (mixed breed, darker person), integrated in the multiethnic Marseilles hip-hop culture, he had dreamed since 1993 of making a movie based on these youth life stories.⁶⁷ This film came out in May 2000, entitled *Comme un aimant* [Like a Magnet] a title that alludes to the destiny of those who irresistibly come back to their old neighborhood, and cannot leave it for a better life, ending their days in a familiar place “where their dreams die.”

Akhenaton directed and starred in this film in collaboration with his friend Kamel Saleh, and he produced its musical track with composer Bruno Coulais. This was not the first French film on hip-hop culture, but the film avoided both stereotypical gangster-action with rapid gunfire, and an excessively jocular tone. It tells the story of a group of friends from North Marseilles, all unemployed young men of Franco-Arab and Franco-Italian descent who hang out together, deplore the dead-end life they lead, live off hustling and small-time crook operations, half-heartedly attempt to seduce girls—as is to be expected in this type of movie, the homosocial bond proves by far to be the most important—and make an ill-fated move toward higher crime. At this point, tragic mechanisms trigger a chain of suicidal acts: Fouad's mother's death pushes him over the edge, he launches a useless hold up, and is shot down; the character played by Akhenaton and his friend Bra-Bra spontaneously beat up a mobster in retaliation for the beating of their associate Santino and are subsequently gunned down. The entire group in the end is led to death or incarceration. In a sumptuous finale, Cahuete (Kamel Saleh), alone, steals a gas truck, dumps gasoline all over the streets of Marseilles and sets them on fire, watching the city light up with ephemeral bonfires. There is an epic quality to the last scenes as he watches from afar this last desperate mark of the young men's attempt to leave their signature on an indifferent world, and the fires all suddenly go out, leaving the screen in blank darkness.

While the film itself can be judged as a contribution to visual cultures, its salient feature remains its particular performance of sounding, its sensitive and inspired interweavings of text and music, its production of music as text and of linguistic mixture. Akhenaton and Bruno Coulais composed the score by seeking *musiques témoins*, that

67. Olivier Cachin, “La vérité sur l'aimant,” *L'affiche* (June 2000): 60–62.

is, musical voices that acted as witnesses. They accomplished this by combining a few tracks of Akhenaton's with a complex dialogue between contemporary French and American rap artists as well as great performers of African-American soul music. Several of the French rappers use varied cultural registers to create a sound unique in that it is "French" linguistically but multicultural, and specifically Mediterranean, in its sound and poetic texture. These include Psy-4-de la Rime which signs off as "Psy-Ka-Dra," pronounced with an Arabic intonation; or K-Rhyme le Roi's "Qibla," which evokes the Prophet Mohammed's desert journey; the presence of singers of Arab, Italian, and Spanish descent working together; or, finally, Akhenaton's own class-conscious and bitter "J'Voulais dire" with its direct reference to Sicily, Naples, and a continuous Southern migration flow.

The resulting score is a powerful, wrenching polyphony, which speaks a multilingual idiom of French, English, Corsican (and through Corsican, alludes to Italianate—Sicilian-Neapolitan—cultures) and a small amount of Arabic. Musically, it is a "rich stew," in which social and political themes are expressed through a cross-cultural dialogue of musical styles. Politically, most of the songs engage the themes of poverty, unemployment, urban devastation, and international political violence. The latter is exemplified through reference to the massacre of Palestinian villagers in Deir Yassin (Millie Jackson, "Deir Yassin"), drawing a parallel with the refugee theme narratively enacted in the film, where *Sauveur* (Akhenaton) is helped and fed by an adolescent Bosnian girl. The references allow in turn analogies between the Bosnian war and the "war" in which these youths see themselves as casualties. The Corsican element (perhaps the boldest because the most jarring within hip-hop musical culture from both an aesthetic and political viewpoint) brings in traditional lamento, a compelling *contrapunto* with the dominant elements of soul, gospel, and rap. But the most effective technique of sounding is articulated through the cross-over of black American artists and French rappers. In the first track, Millie Jackson sings a duo with Shurik'N, one of the lead singers from IAM, a revised version of "Prisoners of love." This sets the tone for the multiple ways in which these African-American soul classics will be reread, a different sound created by the juxtaposition of contemporary rap, layering the original messages and their emotional "soundwaves" in a cross-cultural idiom of both resistance and despair. Thus, Isaac Hayes's "Is it really home?," Cunnie Williams's "Life Goes on," the Dells's "You Promised Me," or gospel singer Marlena Shaw's "Life"

take on especially strong meanings with some of the harsher but more somber rap numbers such as Bouga's "Belsunce Breakdown," a pure Marseilles sound. Sounding is effectuated in yet another subtle way: for the soul tracks, Akhenaton did not call upon the best-known names of soul music (except Isaac Hayes); he sought out of his own musical library connections with singers who had reigned supreme at a certain point in their careers and been somewhat forgotten, such as Millie Jackson. By bringing such artists to the fore in this soundtrack, he returned these great African American performers to public space, sounding another chapter in the history of African American voice. He also used textual layerings so that they expressed pain and questioning in the African American tradition of testimony, to rearticulate the contemporary experiences and disillusioned voice of French ghetto youth and make them intelligible to a wide public. The entire enterprise "sounds" difference and resistant discourses through screenplay, musical score, and production modalities: the music is signed off by such labels as No Sell Out and La Cosca, and the producers include, along with more staid sources like Canal plus, a group called Why Not Productions.

In conclusion, it would seem that little is to be gained by a stark opposition between the place and nature of Francophone studies in France and the United States, although there are certainly differences of inflection, and most importantly, differences of context. Much might be gained, on the other hand, from a rethinking of a term with such a loaded history, one whose political import far outweighed its cultural underpinnings. On both sides of the Atlantic, this would mean engaging in an unfettered dialogue that moves beyond the now moot point of whether Francophone literature should be taught. It means not only acknowledging the inescapable role of colonialism, but also coming to terms with the Academy's enormous discomfort with matters of race, and to recognize the many shifts in thinking and discourse that they incite.

Those working in the context of the United States may acknowledge more openly the crucial need for writers of color to be taught and for scholars of color to teach, without laments about bowing to some ill-defined "political correctness." Yet the French have shown a disquieting eagerness to adopt the term "politically correct," albeit devoid of the intellectual work and harsh conflicts it reflects in the United States.⁶⁸ Such slogans merely parrot conservative U.S. politics and

68. See, for a critique of the new trend to cry "political correctness" whenever racism and anti-Semitism are being questioned, Philippe Sollers, "Les nouveaux bien-pensants," *Le monde* (17 June 2000): 1, 17.

close off all attempts to address—which is not the same thing as to “re-dress”—colonial and racial injustice through culture.

Yet much can be learned in the United States from the French university. In the United States, decentralized and sometimes fragmented university systems do not routinely provide access to the study of languages that the French may still call *orientales*, but at least have been teaching for a while—what high school in the United States teaches Arabic unless it has a specific Islamic orientation? Universities in the United States still need to develop the many fields that lay claim to *Francophonie* in more stable structures. These fields—distinctive cultural, geolinguistic areas within the unwieldy, globalized expanse of “Francophone” literatures and cultures—need to stand as separate areas, each with its immensely complex and exacting set of problems, bodies of primary and secondary sources, and critical tools. If we are serious about the place of Francophone study in the academy, we need to put sufficient resources into training well-rounded specialists, not opportunistic superficialists.

And on both sides of the Atlantic, “Francophone” must move beyond what is studied in books as a recognizable, formally canonic art. Cultural products need to be studied in relation to the living communities producing them, and these communities are at least partially present in Paris, New York, and Montreal. Further, we need to recognize that the children and soon the grandchildren of these communities have developed an idiom of their own, American and African in its roots, but distinctly French in its expression. This new idiom, international, resistant, and transgressive, is providing new and challenging texts, from the diaspora and the so-called “Francophone” world at once.