
H-France Review Vol. 11 (January 2011), No. 18

Hafid Gafäiti, Patricia M. E. Lorcin and David G. Troyansky, eds., *Transnational Spaces and Identities in the Francophone World*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. xxvi + 460 pp. Notes and index. \$ 40.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-0-8032-4452-8

Review by Andrew Stafford, University of Leeds.

'Humans migrate', a postgraduate in migration studies once suggested, in a neat parody of the Marxian *mot* on making history; 'but', he added, in complete agreement this time with Marx, 'not in the circumstances of their choosing'. If taken at face value then, this parodic comment on humanity's utter reliance on movement of peoples, across all time, may suggest that transnationalism, as a set of fields, practices and analyses, is set to have a bright academic and public future.

Although the editor of this journal might not agree, it is possibly felicitous if not appropriate that this book review should be completed somewhat later than requested; for the book under consideration here, a collection of essays on transnationalism in the Francophone world, is itself somewhat tardy in being published. Indeed, this is my only major criticism of this volume (if criticism it be), in that the (excellent) chapters here have emerged mainly if not wholly from a conference on transnationalism held way back in 2002. In other words, in global and transnational terms, quite a lot of water has passed under the Francophone bridge in the period since. That said, these studies here -- on a wide range of topics and regions within Francophone studies -- are still extremely useful.

Divided into six (not the Franco-classical five) sections -- colonialism and immigration, immigrant spaces and identities, Algerian and then Jewish identities, Francophone spaces and finally postmodern sites -- the volume manages to cover the majority of French-speaking regions in the world, and without bracketing out the metropolitan centre. This would seem to me a minimum in a book on transnationalism, especially one which does not (aim to) provide a tight definition of the phenomenon. The volume also does not fight shy of a full range of media, genres and disciplines in its various analyses: film (*Métisse* and *La Haine*); French colonial myths (on the Mediterranean); histories of colonial collaboration (notably in Syria and the *Harkis* in Algeria); accounts of the shantytown (in Algerian Paris) and racial mixing in France; Algerian writing in fiction and non-fiction (by Malika Mokeddem, and Jean Senac respectively); Jewish North-African experiences (Memmi, Derrida and Cixous) and oriental Jewish anti-Arab sentiments; and Franco-Algerian examples (by Leila Sebbar). Africa (in works by Mariama Bâ and Myriam Warner-Vieyra), Vietnam (gender and exile in Viet-Kieu literature, confucianism) and the Middle East (Amin Maalouf) are also represented here. Finally, the volume has space for less geographically-defined material, such as feminism (in relation to neocolonialism), self and otherhood (in the extraordinary anti-orientalist photography by Yasmina Bouziane); and the volume ends with a case-study of the regional dimensions of francophone culture within France (in Limoges), again, a must in any volume on transnationalism.

Overall then, the volume insists upon the open (and often chaotic) exchanges, miscegenations and movements of cultural phenomena around, within and between French-speaking regions, across the globe. Unfortunately, though Viet-Nam is a welcome addition to the list of usual suspects in terms of Francophone regions, it may be at the expense of a transnational phenomenon that is beginning to inflect heavily our understanding of Francophone studies in this new, second decade of the millennium, namely the Black Atlantic. Here Adlai Murdoch and Anne Donadey (2005) have been

ahead of the game, combining both theoretical reflection and historical generalisation with on-the-ground case-study. Indeed, this seems to be the limit of this volume on transnationalism. It merely aggregates a rather serendipitous collection of (impressive) analyses that all have the same wish (and ability) to de-regionalise and de-nationalise (as it were) French-speaking phenomena.

Many of the chapters, given the time lag between conference and volume, could have done with some freshening up: Philip Dine's useful opening piece on Camus and the Mediterranean is unable to take into account the first conference on Camus to be held on Algerian soil (in Algiers in 2006). None of the chapters is able to appreciate the important developments in, firstly, memory studies, especially in the very recent work on multidirectionality by Michael Rothberg (2008); and then, in global political economy where theorists such as Alex Callinicos (2009) are beginning to see new developments since the 1990s that have an enormous bearing on transnational studies (French or otherwise).

My advice on this book then is to: 'fleece' the excellent, free-standing chapters – highlights, in my view, include Neil Macmaster on the Algerian shantytown in Paris, and the interview and photographic images by Yasmina Bouziane; ignore the 'postmodern' veneer which, today (in 2010), in this rapidly changing global political economy, looks less and less shiny, and use the spirit of the conference and the resultant volume to carry further those openings and routes for further research which can be glimpsed emerging from this volume.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Part 1. Colonialism and Immigration

Philip Dine, "The French Colonial Myth of a Pan-Mediterranean Civilization"

Keith David Watenpugh, "The Uncomfortable Inhabitants of French Colonial Modernity: Mandate Syria's *Communities of Collaboration (1920- 1946)*"

Elisa Camiscioli, "Race Making and Race Mixing in the Early Twentieth-century Immigration Debate"

Part 2. Immigrant Spaces and Identities

Neil Macmaster, "Shanty- town republics: Algerian Migrants and the Culture of Space in the *bidonville*"

Todd Shepard, "Excluding the *Harkis* from Repatriate Status, Excluding Muslim Algerians from French Identity"

Alain Gabon, "The Transformation of French Identity in Mathieu Kassovitz's films *Métisse* (1993) and *La Haine* (1995)"

Part 3. Writing Algerian Identities

Robert Aldrich, "A Poet's Politics: Jean Sénac's *Writings during the Algerian War*"

Trudy Agar-Mendousse, "Counter violence and the Ethics of Nomadism: Malika Mokeddem's *Reconstruction of Algerian Identity*"

Mary McCullough, "Interpretation, Representation and Belonging in the Works of Leïla Sebbar"

Part 4. Jewish Migrations and Identities

Sarah Sussman, "Jews from Algeria and French Jewish Identity"

Johann Sadock, "Anti-Arab and Anti-French Tendencies in post-1948 Oriental Jewish Literature Written in French"

Brigitte Weltman-Aron, "The Figure of the Jew in North Africa: Memmi, Derrida, Cixous"

Part 5. Francophone Spaces and Multiple Identities

Antony Johae, "Transnational Identities in the Novels of Amin Maalouf"

Joseph Militello, "Mad Woman in the Senegalese-Muslim Attic: Reading Myriam Warner-Vieyra's *Juletane* and Mariama Bâ's *Un chant écarlaté*"

Georges Van den Abbeele, "Gender, Exile and Return in Viêt-Kieu Literature"

Ali Yédas, "Vietnamese Relationships: Confucian or Francophone Model"

Part 6. Postmodern Sites and Identities

Habiba Deming, "Feminism and Neo-Colonialism: Discursive Practices"

David Prochaska, "The Self as Other: Yasmina Bouziane"

David G. Troyansky, "Displaying World Culture in Provincial France: Francophonie in Limoges"

Andrew Stafford

University of Leeds

A.J.Stafford@leeds.ac.uk

Copyright © 2011 by the Society for French Historical Studies, all rights reserved. The Society for French Historical Studies permits the electronic distribution of individual reviews for nonprofit educational purposes, provided that full and accurate credit is given to the author, the date of publication, and the location of the review on the H-France website. The Society for French Historical Studies reserves the right to withdraw the license for edistribution/republication of individual reviews at any time and for any specific case. Neither bulk redistribution/ republication in electronic form of more than five percent of the contents of H-France Review nor re-publication of any amount in print form will be permitted without permission. For any other proposed uses, contact the Editor-in-Chief of H-France. The views posted on H-France Review are not necessarily the views of the Society for French Historical Studies.

ISSN 1553-9172