

Introduction

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The book is comprised of thirty-three papers composed for the international conference, “Pluri-Culture and Migrant Writings: An Interdisciplinary Approach/ *Pluri-Culture et Écrits migratoires : Une Approche Interdisciplinaire*,” which was held at York University, Toronto, May 17-20, 2012. From every point of view, the conference was a resounding success. Organized by the Canada-Mediterranean Centre (CMC), supported by a generous SSHRC grant, and by the Office of the Dean, LAPS (Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies), the Office of the Vice-President Academic, Stong College, the Département d’Études Françaises, and the English Department, the stated objective of the conference was to reflect on a variety of discourses which address migration – national, social, or individual – and the relationship of those discourses to cultural pluralism. The conference was interdisciplinary and bilingual, in the two official languages of Canada.

Contemporary migration is a complex and problematic phenomenon. Voluntary migration is most often viewed from the perspective of material advancement – “economic” migration aimed at improving a migrant’s standard of living. However, it is also accompanied by a network of political, social, philosophical, and ethical considerations. The migrant does not often take his/ her cultural values into consideration in emigrating from one country to another, nor does the host country – with results ranging from serio-comic to disastrous. In other words, culture in its broadest sense is often overlooked. Yet each immigrant carries within himself/ herself – consciously or no – the baggage of his/ her cultural heritage. Immigration assumes different forms in different countries and on different continents. It is not approached

in the same way in Europe as in North America, and particularly in Canada, whose perspective in turn differs from that of the United States. The process of emigration/ immigration varies according to the host country which receives immigrants, and their country of origin.

The conference emphasized the cultural values that each migrant takes with him in emigrating from one country to another, rather than the theme of material advancement. Thus we stressed the analysis of Pluri-Culture, or Cultural Diversity, in all its manifestations, both “high” and popular (mass media, sports), which are related to migration. The objective was to highlight this pluralism in the productions of immigrant writers or creators in texts, documents, cultural artifacts (novels, poems, plays, essays, journals and magazines, newspapers, diaries, biographies and autobiographies, interviews, correspondence, films). The essential element was that they all treat the interaction of the immigrant’s original culture and that of the host country. Papers deal with the comparative contexts (immigration in Europe, in North America), as well as the historical framework (colonialism and its aftermath, the diverse waves of immigration from the 19th to the 21st centuries). We studied ways in which cultural pluralism can mitigate – perhaps eliminate – the so-called “shocks of civilization.” The conference aimed at creating cultural dialogue, a primordial factor in the construction of identity, the relationship between Self and Other, the bridge between similarity and difference.

Participants included both established and younger scholars, from all over the world. We received approximately 90 proposals, from which approximately 60 were selected. Despite the anticipated problems with visas, and with scholars who failed to receive funding or release time from their home institutions, the total number of active participants/ *intervenant(e)s* was close to what we had originally estimated a year previous for the SSHRC application: 50-52. Of these, close to 30 were accepted for publication. In addition, some of the papers published in this collection were submitted by those unable to attend.

The participants came from a variety of countries (Canada, the United States, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Cameroon, Sénégal, France, Italy, Belgium, Spain, the United Kingdom, China) and fields (literature, languages, linguistics, creative writing, history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, kinesiology, film studies). The multiplicity of viewpoints – existential, social, literary, linguistic, historical, psychological, philosophic, anthropological – led to an understanding of the degree to which the immigrant is able to adapt his/ her intrinsic values in a strange land, and in turn of the extent to which the host country may be enriched by the contributions of the newcomers. We discussed working towards a reciprocity imbued with tolerance to lessen the shocks, hardships, frictions between the original culture of the immigrant, and the new culture to be acquired, and in fact created, by both old inhabitants and new.

Our keynote speakers were Professor Patrick Imbert (Université d'Ottawa), who gave the opening address which appears at the beginning of this text; Professor Emeritus Rafik Darragi (University of Tunis); and Professor Nicola D'Ambrosio (University of Bari, Italy). The latter two both spoke on the creative work of University Professor Emeritus Hédi Bouraoui (York University). Professors Darragi's and D'Ambrosio's essays appear in the longer opening section of this collection, on Hédi Bouraoui's work. Three graduate students – Boussad Berrichi, Mouhamadou Cissé, and Jonathan Russel Nsangou – also received support from the SSHRC grant, and their papers appear in this collection.

We scheduled concurrent conference sessions to fit everyone in. The themes treated provided, more or less, the organization of this book. Attendees constituted a mini-United Nations. The success of the conference is measured particularly by the global network of contacts we have established, which was aided by the conviviality of meetings held totally on the York campus, including accommodations and meals. Participants have established an email address list and are keeping in touch. They have been made aware of our upcoming CMC online journal, to which they may wish to contribute.

The papers published here have been divided into eight sections, including the first-day keynote address (I); II. Migration in the Work of Hédi Bouraoui/ *La Migration dans l'Oeuvre d'Hédi Bouraoui*; III. Migration and France/ *La Migration et la France*; IV. Migration in Québec and Canada/ *La Migration au Québec et au Canada*; V. Comparative Approaches to Immigration/ *Approches Comparées à l'Immigration*; VI. Sephardic Literature/ *La Littérature Séphardique*; VII. Female Immigration/ *L'Immigration au Féminin*; and VIII. Arts, Sports, and the Creative Process: A Transcultural Dialogue/ *Les Arts, les Sports, et le Processus Créateur: Dialogue Transculturel*. These are followed by the Conclusion, written by University Professor Robert Drummond (Political Science, Former Dean, Faculty of Arts, York University). Perhaps needless to say, there is considerable overlap in these categories or themes; they grew out of the nature of the papers proposed, and were not imposed on the authors in advance, as a grid.

In the opening keynote address, Professor Patrick Imbert, who holds a Research Chair at the Université d'Ottawa, focusing on Social and Cultural Challenges in a Knowledge-Based Society, used the metaphor of gaming, or gambling, to describe some stereotypes about immigration in our postmodern age. He argues that the stereotype is that life is a game with limited stakes. Riches are finite, and therefore there is no escaping the dichotomy that one wins and the other loses, the loser inevitably being the new arrival, the immigrant. Imbert's metaphor conjures up another image, that of the pie chart so dear to the hearts of economists. According to laissez-faire economics going back to Adam Smith (and promoted by Margaret Thatcher and her disciples), the pie is finite, so for one group to have a larger slice, another will have a smaller, or perhaps none at all. Hence poverty and unemployment are inevitable. The counter to this is to expand the size of the pie itself, or in Imbert's terms to increase the stakes, the liberal or socialist answer. Imbert contrasts two literary texts, Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi* and Moacyr Scliar's *Max and the Cats*, to illustrate the games of winning and not winning in a comparative context (Canada, Brazil), and notes that the protagonist in *The Life*

of Pi is a chameleon able to expand the stakes. Professor Imbert found his metaphor and insights being quoted frequently by later speakers at the conference (and indeed in several of the papers published here).

The Second Section, or first group of papers (II), focuses on immigration as a central thematic in the work of Hédi Bouraoui. We decided to position this section at the beginning of the Proceedings, as it became evident that the largest number of papers concerned Bouraoui's work. This was not too surprising, as Hédi Bouraoui was the founder of the Canada-Maghreb Centre, now the Canada-Mediterranean Centre (CMC) at York, and he has devoted a large portion of his career – including poems, novels, academic publications, as well as teaching – to issues connected with migration and Transculturalism, which he has been theorizing since the 1970s. The other two keynote speakers, Professors Rafik Darragi and Nicola D'Ambrosio, focused on the theme of migration in Bouraoui's work, so it made sense to place their papers in this section. Others of the papers were originally presented at the conference under other rubrics such as Bouraoui's Poetics (Bernadette Cailler), or Female Immigration (Elizabeth Sabiston), but taken together, all these comprise a coherent unit offering an overview of one major writer's perspective on a theme so crucial, and often problematical, in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Professor D'Ambrosio, who has translated into Italian many of Hédi Bouraoui's works, addresses issues of globalization and politics in Bouraoui's works. On the one hand, identity based on geography, religion, ethnicity is loudly proclaimed in the world we inhabit, while on the other hand globalization tends to erase cultural differences and shore up an impoverished uniformity or conformity. D'Ambrosio traces Bouraoui's migrant writings as a pilgrimage from Africa to Europe, the United States and Canada. He sees them as prophecies of the cultural crises we witness at present, but they also foreshadow the possibility of a more hopeful future based on ancestral values of individual dignity and liberty. Bouraoui's works attempt to sensitize not only the Mediterranean peoples, but also Europeans and North

Americans, to the richness of their cultural heritage. D'Ambrosio examines Bouraoui's perspective in his fiction, which rejects Manicheanism and attempts to promote dialogue between peoples. Globalization is usually perceived negatively as the aggressive pursuit of capitalism at the expense of diversity and humanism. Bouraoui's hero Samy in *Puglia à bras ouverts* says, in favor of pluralism, "*Ma nomadanse transporte avec elle toutes les racines qu'elle a acquises sur son chemin.* »

D'Ambrosio examines particularly the cases of Egypt, "the Mother of the Universe," and of Tunisia. Bouraoui's *La Pharaone* is a reminder of the splendid heritage of the Pharaohs, notably of the first female Pharaoh Hatchepsut, compared to the misery of the masses in modern-day Egypt. As for Tunisia, *Retour à Thyna* explores the central characters' return to their ancient roots through arts, the mosaics, poetry, long forgotten because of a rampant greed. *Cap Nord*, the first of the trilogy on the Mediterranean islands, depicts the expatriation of a Tunisian in search of opportunity, but Bouraoui also highlights the contributions of immigrants to the various countries they inhabit. D'Ambrosio stresses the old Mediterranean values and history – of Carthage, St. Augustine, Ibn Khaldoun, father of social science, Hannibal Barka – that can and should be recuperated today. The "*rêve méditerranéen*" and its humanism have relevance today for the Mediterranean, but also for the global village we inhabit.

Professor Darragi, who headed the Bourguiba Institute of Modern Languages at the University of Tunis, offers an ambitious overview of Hédi Bouraoui's work which looks back to the Mediterranean sources of Western civilization. Coming from the pluricultural Tunisia, Bouraoui's own migration to Europe, and then to North America, offers a paradigm of his various protagonists' "*émigressence*" in quest of the Other. Darragi reads Bouraoui's poetry (and poetic novels) as a ceaseless interrogation: "*Qui suis-je? Qui sont les Autres?* » For the migrant writer, the quest for the Other and the quest for the Self are fused. Darragi compares this hunger for identity to Keats's concept of "negative capability." The interrogation is also specifically that of the poet, and his creative process. Hannibal, the hero of

Méditerranée à voile toute, the last of Bouraoui's trilogy, replaces the "Qui suis-je?" with "Qu'ai-je fait?" – What have I created? Hannibal, like Hédi Bouraoui, is proud of his migrant status.

Immigration is a two-way street: the immigrant must adapt to a new way of life, but also share what he brings of a former life. As Bouraoui writes in *Ainsi parle la Tour CN*, "*nous sommes tous des émigrés sur terre.* » His writing is a celebration of fraternity, expressed linguistically through borrowings from several languages, as well as metaphorically. The Mediterranean Sea itself becomes a central metaphor for this mixture of races, cultures, languages, which should lead to communion. Bouraoui shows no ambivalence about transplantation, no nostalgia for return to the mother country. He resists autobiography, but Darragi sees a spiritual portrait especially in Tar, the protagonist of *Rose des Sables*, the desert being Bouraoui's other key image. Darragi also traces the major emblems of the adopted land, Canada: the CN Tower which welcomes immigrants and First Nations peoples, and the mysterious Moose presiding serenely over Nature. Writing itself has a totemic value, asserts Darragi. He reads Bouraoui's novels as psychological, a quest for love, the ultimate fusion with the Other. He also notes, importantly, Bouraoui's resistance to all religious fanaticism and to violence, his *engagement* with dialogues based on reason and compassion. Darragi ends his paper as he has begun it, with questions, but this time rhetorical ones that presume Bouraoui's optimistic belief in human progress through culture, education, and egalitarianism.

Boussad Berrichi, who holds a recent doctorate from the Sorbonne, gives a fascinating reading of Amazigh (or Berber, the Western term) influences on Bouraoui's work, notably in *Retour à Thyra* and *Paris berbère*. In so doing, he also provides invaluable insights into the Berber way of life for the uninitiated reader, and notes the close relationship between the treatment (call it "benign neglect") of these indigenous peoples of the Maghreb, and that of the Amerindians, or First Nations, of North America.

Angela Buono's paper concentrates on the close connection Bouraoui established between his poetry and criticism, in works such as *Haitivois*, *Livr'errance*, and *Struga: Margelle d'un Festival*. With frequent allusions to *Transpoétique: Éloge du Nomadisme*, Bouraoui's award-winning work (l'APFUCC, best book of literary criticism in French in 2006), theorizing the nomadic experience as a creative impulse, Buono analyzes the dialogue Hédi Bouraoui creates with other poets, writers, and artists. This is a very subtle and incisive paper, for Buono understands what Bouraoui means when he writes, "When I speak to you, I migrate into you by my language, my words, my sentences, my intonation, my gestures [...] and if you reply, your words immigrate into me. . . ."

Abderrahman Beggar, who organized a conference session devoted solely to the work of Bouraoui, studies the "émigressant" ideal expressed in it. "Émigressence," the title of one of his collections of poetry, could describe the efforts in all the rest to transcend categories, through invented words (Bouraoui: "*mots-concepts*"), the transgression of boundaries, geographic as well as literary/ linguistic and generic; the filling in of the blank page, or "*béance*," a creative space. Beggar uses the interesting botanical metaphor of "caprification" (the attachment of a wild fig to attract bees and promote the cross-pollination of the fig tree) to describe the CN Tower in *Ainsi parle la Tour CN*, which becomes a kind of tree attracting Canadians from all walks of life, including numerous immigrants and members of the First Nations. Beggar defines "émigressence" as a quest for bridges leading to a healthier, more sane society.

Bernadette Cailler studies the poetry of Hédi Bouraoui as it reflects migration from the birth home to, finally, the adoptive home, Canada. She begins with a close reading of two earlier poems, "*Canaduitude*" and "*Heureux qui comme Ulysse a fait un beau voyage*," and continues with a selection from *Echosmos*, and the more recent *Émigressence* and *Sfaxitude*. She notes both his poetic ingenuity and his "*pensée complexe*." Cailler incorporates a detailed examination of the linguistic word play of "*Canaduitude*," evoking "*Négritude*" as a comparable cultural construct, but also targeting the Americanization of Canada. "*Heureux qui comme*

Ulysse a fait un beau voyage” echoes Du Bellay’s classic poem. Appearing at the end of *Vers et l’envers*, published in the International Year of the Child, Cailler traces its origin to the quest for father and mother, and the mother specifically as symbol of the country, “*mere-patrie*.” For myself, however, this poem is also an early manifestation of the Ulysses figure, the shadow behind most of Bouraoui’s male protagonists who are motivated by wander-lust. Cailler contrasts Canada, the adoptive land, to Tunisia, the birthplace. An aspect worth remarking is Cailler’s treatment of her own journey through Hédi Bouraoui’s works over the years, and the evolving perspective she traces, which she calls a “*traversée*,” borrowing Bouraoui’s term in which she finds “*une pensée-écriture plus complexe qu’elle ne l’envisageait dans le passé*,” which she sometimes finds difficult to grasp.

Samira Étuil analyzes the last of Bouraoui’s fictional trilogy, *Méditerranée à voile toute*, where, coincidentally, the Ulysses figure treated by Cailler in the poetry takes center stage in the novel. She quotes Bouraoui’s *Transpoétique* to the effect that migrant writing refers not only to the final product, but also to the creative process. Bouraoui compares this process to the nomads leaving their tracks in the desert. Étuil therefore tracks the displacements of the hero Hannibal and his son Télémaque in a particular physical space, in this case the Mediterranean islands. She recognizes that the real quest is towards a Mediterranean ideal of cultural exchange, or Transculturalism. In Malta, center of the Mediterranean, Télémaque’s quest is completed.

My own paper, “Female Immigration Then and Now: Cather’s *Ántonia* and Bouraoui’s *Laura* as Talespinner,” grew out of my perception, as a sometime Americanist, that writings describing the American immigrant experience at the turn of the 20th century (Cather’s *My Ántonia*, Henry Roth’s *Call It Sleep*, et al.) have considerable common ground with writings about the immigrant experience in general, at the turn of the 21st century. Originally part of the “Female Immigration” section, it sheds some light on the hardships of immigrants across the years, and across geographical spaces, the discrimination and prejudice they encounter. More importantly, it underlines the

achievements of immigrants, their contributions to the adopted culture and the changes they effect in negotiating a dialogue. In particular, the paper focuses on female immigrants as repositories of their cultures, and as storytellers, whether through an oral folk tradition, as is the case of the poorly educated (because female and “foreign”) *Ántonia*, or through the sophisticated writings of Laura, Hannibal’s wife and *Télémaque*’s mother. Both novels offer models of creative cooperation between old settlers and new immigrants.

The next Section, III, On Migration in France, also contains a substantial number of contributions, many of which demonstrate, contrary to mass media coverage, the sheer variety and diversity of peoples who have elected France as their second, or adoptive home. Sylvie Brodziak’s paper, on the patchwork of memory in the work of Léonora Miano, presents heroines who are fragmented characters, born in a black immigrant community, growing out of a history of slavery and colonization. Often finding themselves in conflict with the social reality of modern France, they try to assemble fragments of a collective memory – “These fragments I have shored against my ruins” (T.S. Eliot, “The Waste Land”) – enabling them to invent a new, peaceful community.

Sabrina Fatmi-Sakri’s piece deals with a hybrid Franco-Algerian identity put to the test in the novel of Nor Edine Boudjedia, *Little Big Bounoule*. Starting with the assumption that *all* cultures are “*métissées*,” Fatmi-Sakri points out that this “hybridity” is nonetheless problematized in postcolonial discourse. She argues that the encounter of Algerian and French on French soil gives birth to a new identity, composed by “*bricolage*,” for a new generation born in France. Boudjedia is a “Beur” (*Berber en Europe*). Fatmi-Sakri quotes Boudjedia’s narrator, “Culture belongs to he who appropriates it.” His protagonist, from an educated family and well-schooled himself, seems totally assimilated in France, but must set forth on a return to his origins to achieve a complete identity, but one which is constantly evolving.

Nadia Grine presents part of an ongoing sociological project based on interviews with Maghrebi immigrants in France. She outlines some

fascinating source material on conflicts between French and North African cultural norms. Her research here focuses particularly on the much publicized issue of the French prohibition of the Islamic veil in public schools, dating from March 2004. She addresses the whole issue of identity construction by the immigrant, and cites Frantz Fanon on the desire for assimilation being motivated by the compulsion to prove one's humanity to a dominant majority culture that refuses to recognize it. She associates especially the rhetoric of Nicolas Sarkozy (himself, ironically, the son of immigrants) as a prime cause of French discomfort about Maghrebi immigration, thus fanning the flames of distrust of the unknown. Grine uses a series of transcribed Internet interviews to examine the thoughts of Maghreb immigrants on the matter of national identity. In this paper she offers a discourse analysis of French Muslim women whose attachment to their religion is not tied to their garb. In fact, only two interviewees wear the veil. As for the burqa, in the Maghreb it is not worn in any case except by those perceived to be extremists, and is alien to Maghrebi religious practices. In France it remains a minority phenomenon. She concludes that the media have presented a distorted, exaggerated view of a relatively minor issue.

Kay Li's paper, on Cross-Cultural Encounters in the works of the Nobel Prize-winning (2000) Gao Xingian, reminds us that France has attracted many writers, of many nationalities. Gao is ethnically Chinese, emigrated to France in 1987, and became a citizen ten years later, when he "became a full member of French society." Li argues, however, that his works always reveal a tension between his Chinese roots, and the universal themes he treats to reach a global audience. His degree in French and literature at the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute helped prepare him for his new home in France. Li analyzes several of his works, stressing the centripetal movement towards the self, and the centrifugal towards universalism. He not only attempts to build bridges between Self and Other, between Orient and Occident, his work is interdisciplinary, for he is also a painter and playwright who uses imaginative scenic designs on stage. His works, particularly

Soul Mountain, have been translated into English and French. Kay Li has added to her paper a comparison to Mo Yan, the 2012 Nobel Laureate for Literature. Gao writes from outside the culture, Mo Yan from within China, but the latter also recognizes global influences: William Faulkner, Gabriel Garcia Márquez, etc.

Liliane Rada Nasser adds yet another dimension to immigration in France. Taking off from her own life, she reflects on her personal experience as a Lebanese immigrant in Marseille, so we move in this paper from Paris, the capital, to Marseille, the city by the sea where many immigrants have their first glimpse of France, and where many remain. Perhaps an atypical immigrant, a Lebanese born in Sénégal, Nasser determines to search the past history of relations between Lebanon and France. Like Nadia Grine, she also conducts interviews to piece together the relations between two countries, particularly in their “*lieu de rencontre*” in Marseille, which is a kind of “melting pot,” or crossroads of cultures. Unlike the more publicized African immigration to Paris, Lebanese immigration Nasser characterizes as “invisible,” partly because it is so diverse (including ten different religions, multiple professions and types of schooling). Housing tends to be chosen according to socioprofessional level rather than ethnicity. However, the Lebanese War, starting in 1975, did lead to a greater visibility for a time, to a resurgence of Lebanese identity. Today, there is no unity as a group, but a composite identity.

Closer to home, in Section IV, Migration in Québec and Canada, a number of papers focus on the culturally diverse peoples who have made Canada their home, probably helped along by the policy of bilingualism and biculturalism, which led inevitably to multiculturalism, as groups other than Anglophone and francophone claimed their rights as Canadians.

Sophie Bastien’s incisive analysis of the two-part novel, *Ces enfants d’ailleurs*, by the Québec writer Arlette Cousture, positions it convincingly as a serious work about immigration, not just the popular success that became a television mini-series in 1997-98. The novels focus on three Polish siblings, and their fates following the Second World

War, when they were orphaned cruelly. Each of the three experiences a very different form of adaptation to Canadian society: one in Anglophone rural Manitoba, the other two in francophone urban Québec. The elder brother tries to preserve his Polish past, the younger to adapt to Québec, while the sister occupies a middle ground. All three have a musical background, and the sister makes music her profession. The end of the novel uses music as “*un point sublime de rencontre*,” of nations, and of generations.

Rosa de Diego offers an equally intriguing reading of a play about Québec immigration, *Bashir Lazhar*, suivi de *Au bout du fil*, by Évelyne de La Chenelière. While *Ces enfants d'ailleurs* looked at a history of European immigration to Canada, *Bashir Lazhar* examines the contemporary immigration of an Algerian to francophone Québec. The play was made into a very successful Québec film. Bashir's family in Algeria were victims of terrorism, and he arrives in Québec alone, with the past closed behind him. With no experience, he replaces a sixth-grade Montréal teacher who committed suicide in front of the class, and has to deal not only with his own trauma, but with that of his students. Analyzing La Fontaine's fable, “*Le loup et l'agneau*,” the students come to see it as a parable of injustice. The wolf represents the dominant, complacent “*souches*” of Québec, the lamb the poor Algerian newcomer. The school becomes a microcosm of Québec society, and La Chenelière redefines the Québec identity in relation to multiplicity and otherness. The text is fragmented, and the reader is drawn into putting together the pieces of the puzzle. The students themselves come from the multicultural community, and find common ground with their new teacher. Although the play was published in 1999, it obviously resonates with the aftermath of September 2001, the attacks on schoolchildren in Newtown, Connecticut, the Boston Marathon bombings, and so on. Bashir's is a special case, within immigration, of the political refugee. La Chenelière, herself Québécoise, considers that Québec has developed a passion for “*la somme des autres*. »

Linda Fasano studies a single major figure, Naïm Kattan, native of Baghdad, who lived for a time in Paris, and then chose his third “*ville de naissance*”—or re-naissance – that most cosmopolitan of Québec cities, Montréal, his “mosaic” city. He was to become a pillar of the Canada Council, and drafter of the Royal Commission report on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, thus promoting his belief in ethnic diversity and multiculturalism. His first three novels are the basis for his pluricultural aesthetic theory, in which he seeks not “*identités racine*” but “*identités relation*.” Kattan constantly seeks to link Orient and Occident, as well as the situation of Jews within both cultures. As Fasano puts it, “*Kattan a fait de son infortune de migrant sa force et sa fortune.*» Montréal is for him the quintessence of all the other cities in which he has lived.

Sophie Lavoie offers us yet another perspective on Québec immigration, that of Latin America, in the poetry of the Peruvian-Québécoise Lady Rojas Benevente. Latin American writers are often excluded from collections of immigrant Québec writers because they compose only rarely in French, and are also not often translated (two sides of the same coin). Lavoie notes that Rojas Benavente also is a more militant feminist than other female Québec writers. Her poetry valorizes the richness of Québec culture, but also the duality and “otherness” of the recent arrivals, and of a woman (herself) working in a “masculine” setting (a university). The Montréal Massacre at the École Polytechnique, December 6, 1980, was a catalyst propelling the poet’s identification with Québec women.

So far, the Canadian section focuses on creative writers of diverse origins, Polish, Algerian, Iraqi, Peruvian, changing the face of Canada and, in particular, Québec. Olga Stein examines the other aspect of creativity, and that is its critical reception as measured by reviews, awards, “celebrity.” The latter, in the person of global “stars” like Naipaul and Rushdie, have been “canonized,” and may achieve some freedom in subject matter, but others have remained marginalized, an experience which is shared as their common ground.

In Section V, a number of writers adopt comparative approaches to immigration, which are extremely diverse. Sabrina Alessandrini and Francesca Gisbussi collaborated on a paper dealing with intercultural educational programs in Italy directed at migrants, and especially their children. The integration of children can be problematic, causing at times a rupture within the traditional family. At the same time, the acquisition of intercultural skills becomes increasingly important in the global village. Alessandrini and Gisbussi examine “the literature of migration” in the form of questionnaires and interviews of twenty-seven adolescents born in Italy to migrant parents. Their situation is further complicated by a conservative educational institution. The promotion of integration in the classroom has to be seen as multicultural and multilingual. The authors stress the role of literary texts in breaking down barriers between people, in recognizing and respecting the otherness of the other. Therefore the literary texts of migrant writers can play a major role in developing empathy.

Corinne Alexandre-Garner develops the fascinating idea of tracing, in Nicole Kraus’s *La grande maison*, the pilgrimage of an object, an enormous wooden desk from Hungary, where it belonged to a Jewish historian forced to flee the Nazis, to Germany, to London and then New York. The historian’s son George Weisz plans to reconstruct his father’s study in his own home in Jerusalem. When the quest ends, George Weisz commits suicide. The desk becomes a metaphor for the 20th-century historical migrations propelled by racism, violence, and intolerance. The construction of the migrant object, which is, after all, the site of the historian’s writings, is analogous to Kraus’s construction of her fiction. Perhaps Weisz’s suicide stems from the fact that the recovered object cannot fill the gap of the dead father, and only words can transmit History.

Mouhamoudou Cissé offers an ambitious, extended analysis of the migrant subject in three francophone novels, from, respectively, the Caribbean (Maryse Condé, *Les belles ténébreuses*), Subsaharan Africa (Abdourahman Wabéri, *Passage de larmes*), and the Maghreb (Tahar Ben Jelloun, *Au pays*). The migrant subject becomes the aesthetic

element from which these authors construct displacements towards new horizons, or returns to origins, in a space-time continuum of otherness. Migration becomes a symbol for the human condition in general in the disorderly, conflicted world we all inhabit.

Lesley Higgins and Marie-Christine Leps study a ship, the *Oronsay*, that appears in two novels of Michael Ondaatje, *The Cat's Table* (2011) and *Anil's Ghost* (2010). Higgins and Leps view the ship as a "heterotopia," in Michel Foucault's terms, a real space that represents, but also calls into question, other spaces "produced by established relations of power and knowledge" (Foucault, "Different Space" 178-9). In *The Cat's Table*, the later novel, Ondaatje takes a backwards glance. In it the *Oronsay* is a luxury liner in 1954, but in *Anil's Ghost*, set during the Sri Lankan war of the 1980s, it is a rusty laboratory docked in order to investigate genocide on the island. It sounds like a "Ship of Fools" with its heterogeneous passengers and function. The authors stress that heterotopic spaces destabilize and disrupt the reader, in effect forcing him to "migrate" towards otherness. The boy Michael in *Cat's Table* has to struggle towards pluriculturalism. He also learns the limits of the literary, which can be canonized or serve imperialism, and he seeks instead to listen to, and translate, multiple mysterious voices.

Ines Horchani, like Mouhamadou Cissé, examines a number of texts by different authors, in this case not only francophone, but all in a franco-arabic tradition. As Horchani rightly states, "*Migratoire, la littérature de langue arabe l'est depuis l'origine.* » She points out that pre-Islamic poetry was the work of wandering poets or nomads, who raise the same questions: What will remain behind us? What do we leave to the survivors? Horchani draws a parallel between her migrant writers of the 20th century and their nomadic ancestors. She notes that the name Hagar, the mother of the Arab tribes, derives from "*hijra*," which means "migration." Horchani provides an extremely valuable summary of Arab migration to France and Canada in the 20th century. Since Canada has no direct history of colonialism (except through Great Britain), it is not surprising that the majority

of postcolonial francophone immigrants have chosen France, rather than francophone Canada, as their adoptive country. Wajdi Mouawad, whose family opted for Canada, is an exception who proves the rule. Horchani traces the various stages of acculturation through quotations from her authors: the parents, guardians of the birth culture; the school, the means of socialization to the new adoptive culture, and often a place of exile. She notes the frequent resistance, but also the need for dialogue and peaceful coexistence. Horchani quotes rather generously, but the reader unfamiliar with these texts will find the references helpful. She concludes that, contrary to the sad tone of pre-Islamic poetry, migrant writers of today welcome nomadism as an opportunity to multiply possibilities.

Like Horchani, Jonathan Russel Nsangou views “*L’Ailleurs*,” the world elsewhere experienced by the migrant, as an opportunity, a source of creativity. Most francophone African authors write as exiles or immigrants. Their works may be anchored in the country of origin, but they are also marked by the place of exile, or the adoptive country. The writer’s confrontation with “Elsewhere” results in intertextuality derived from the culture of the Other, but also in creativity born of the rupture experienced by departure from the birth country, and the encounter with the Other. Nsangou makes the very suggestive point that distance and solitude inspire migrants with the desire to write. Otherness, as a new space, becomes a suitable frame for literary creation. Nsangou examines this multicultural space in Mongo Beti’s *Trop de soleil tue l’amour* and Fatou Diome’s *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique*. Nsangou celebrates the crossing of boundaries or frontiers, which is comparable to what Patrick Imbert calls the “*jeu à somme non nulle*.”

A very important subgroup of migrant writings is Sephardic literature, represented here in Section VI by two papers, one from the United States and the other from Europe. Nina Lichtenstein’s imaginatively titled paper, “Unpacking Her Cultural Baggage: North African, Jewish, and French,” is an expansive, meticulously researched analysis tracing the contributions of Sephardic women writers. She takes as her epigraph Hédi Bouraoui’s remark about “*les sédiments culturels de mon propre bagage*,”

and expands on the metaphor. She notes that aside from Israel, France has the largest Sephardic population in the world, and that the majority of the Jewish population was originally from North Africa. They have transformed the face of French Jewry, and also, as postcolonial peoples, share many experiences with the French Arab population. Lichtenstein focuses on two novels by Sephardic women, Jewish-Algerian writer Annie Cohen's *Le Marabout de Blida* (1996) and Jewish-Tunisian Annie Fitoussi's *La Mémoire folle de Mouchi Rabbinou* (1985), in order to study "the often confusing and arduous process of unpacking and taking ownership of one's cultural heritage." She notes that this is both a unique and an understudied multicultural experience.

Ewa Tartakowska, who lives in Paris, also takes up the task of examining the multiple identities of Jewish North-Africans in France, and especially in Paris, where their population increased dramatically following decolonization. Writers of Judeo-Maghrebi origin have been raising their voices. They attest to a plural identity, based on both old and new. North African Jews accepted colonization because they viewed France as the country of the Rights of Man, and as the emancipator of French Jews. However, these views led to acculturation, separating them from the Judeo-Arabic language, and from their shared history with Islamic countries. Sephardic writers attempt to articulate the postcolonial identity, and their cultural pluralism.

Section VII, on Female Immigration, obviously overlaps with most of the other sections, as women immigrants and women writers constitute about 50% of those studied. The grouping is therefore somewhat arbitrary, but all four papers concern women writers, Algerian and Canadian. Nasser Benamara writes about the Algerian novelist Malika Mokeddem's *L'Interdite*.¹ As Benamara states, Mokeddem writes novels of "transgression," and sees herself as "*une femme de frontières*." In nine novels produced since the 1990s, she presents herself as a product of two cultures – on the one hand, the Maghrebi

¹ In fact, we had a large number of proposals on Mokeddem, but in the final analysis only two papers because a number of possible presenters were unable to come.

oral tradition and, on the other, Western literature through readings and writings. Having completed her medical studies at Montpellier in France, she decided in the 1980s to devote her life to writing. Her poetics of openness, of wandering, is also strongly feminist, rejecting an identity fixed by gender and space. Thus her writing is nomadic, but in a feminist sense. The desert and the Mediterranean become transcultural metaphors (as they do for Bouraoui and a number of other writers born in the Maghreb). Her sexuality is itself seen as a form of “*métissage*,” crossing frontiers.

Samir Messaoudi deals with a work by another Algerian woman novelist and essayist, Assia Djébar, whose fame came earlier than Mokeddem's, almost to the point of canonization. Like Mokeddem's *L'Interdite* a novel of the 1990s, Djébar's *Les Nuits de Strasbourg* presents the story of an Algerian woman who has immigrated to France, where she confronts past memories, particularly those of childhood, and embarks on a quest for identity. Messaoudi notes that identity is complex, evasive, ungraspable. There is a tension between a collective, or static identity (the past), and an evolving, ever-changing narrative identity. Memory becomes therapeutic for the heroine. Djébar herself referred in an interview to her own quest: “*quête personnelle, tout autant que collective.*” It is an interrogation about the place of women in a patriarchal society. Messaoudi stresses that the protagonist constructs her own individuality, creating her freedom and authenticity – I would say in an existential sense, contrasted to, as Messaoudi puts it, the banishment of the first person singular “*je*,” “*I*,” from the “sacred text.”

A female scholar resident in Canada, Simona Pruteanu, in an insightful piece, also deals with the work of Mokeddem, as well as with Abba Farhoud, a Lebanese woman publishing in Québec, and with two male novelists, Sergio Kokis, a Brazilian writer settled in Québec, and Tahar Ben Jelloun, a Moroccan writer established in France. Noting that most migrant women writers tend to embrace the condition of “*l'entre-deux*,” which gives them more freedom to express their identity, which is hybrid but rich in contradictions, Pruteanu asks whether migrant men represent their position differently from migrant

women. She concludes that unlike the women, for the male writers the only “rootedness” they allow is in their art. The women return to their countries often, try to link past, present, and future, while in the masculine space-time continuum the characters are usually exiles, wanderers, who do not regret the past, or the rupture with families. Pruteanu recognizes that she is dealing with fictional constructs, but wonders to what extent the characters project the relationship of their authors to past and present.

Allan Weiss offers a totally different perspective on migration, in fact a kind of inversion of the theme. He focuses on the short stories of Isabel Huggan, a Canadian woman writer who accompanied her husband to Nairobi, Kenya, where he worked on a project for an international development agency. Scholars of the Western-African encounter tend to examine males who chose to go to Africa, where they assume dominant positions. Huggan’s transplantation was not by choice, and her gender contributed to making her experience in Africa more complex than that of her husband. She has admitted the “culpability” of her political innocence – or perhaps “naïveté” would be the better word. The narrators of her stories feel guilt over the colonial past, and try to overcome it by erasing cultural barriers through friendships. Like many well-intentioned liberals, they fail to come to terms with the complexities and ambiguities of the situation. The common element in all the white-African encounters is money, which includes, for instance, the egalitarian North American discomfort at having servants for the first time. Perhaps her heroines, and Huggan herself, would have benefited from reading some Victorian and Edwardian novels (or their popular culture counterparts on television, “Upstairs, Downstairs,” and now “Downton Abbey”). Or William Faulkner on the shrewd intelligence of the downtrodden. The overwhelming feeling Huggan’s protagonists finally experience is powerlessness to solve Africa’s social problems. Divided by race and money from the Africans they would like to help, their innocence, Weiss concludes, “constitutes culpability.”

The last Section, VIII, is comprised of papers on sports and on theatre as cultural productions which help to create dialogue between peoples.²

Wally Dyba and Hernán Humaña, kinesiologists and volleyball coaches at York University, offer a lively paper on the role of sports in promoting good will and friendships among nations. They look at the positive experiences of Canadian teams travelling abroad and the corollary, foreign teams (Japan, Mexico, Holland, Cuba) hosted in Canada. They note that literature uses language, sports physicality (kinesics, or body language) to communicate. The Olympic Games, in their origin, incorporated poets, writers, and sculptors as well as athletes, and Priscila Uppal, a York Professor, helped to revive this tradition when she became Poet in Residence at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. This paper was, in fact, partly inspired by a conversation with Wally about hosting a Japanese team in Toronto who did not speak any English, while the York team had no one who spoke Japanese, yet friendships were built, and there was a learning curve on both sides. It should be said that Professors Dyba and Humaña exemplified in their very animated presentation, exactly what they are writing about here: the fusion of gestures and words. They quote a Chinese motto of the 1970s to conclude: “Friendship is first and competition second.”

Dahou Malika’s paper is an ambitious reading of the Western influence on contemporary black African theatre. She demonstrates convincingly the influence of Samuel Beckett and of Victor Hugo (possibly also Jean-Paul Sartre) on the Béninois José Pliya. She compares the Brechtian treatment of alienation to the work of the Chad author Lamko Koulsy, and examines the Western classical tradition of tragedy in relation to the plays *Bintou* and *Big Shoot* of Koffi Kwahulé. In all cases the Western tradition is transformed, adapted to local norms, sometimes interrogated or exploded. In fact, contemporary black African theatre “*passé en effet par une écriture du dérèglement et de la dissidence.* » Malika

² We also had proposals on film and fine arts, but no final papers.

concludes that each culture not only questions that of the Other, but is also enriched by it.

We are still awaiting a study of the impact of African theatre on the Occidental. It also seems clear that postcolonial nations are undergoing many of the same traumas that the Western world experienced earlier, as in the *miserabilisme* of Victor Hugo. The 2013 collapse of a garment factory in Bangladesh, killing over 1000 people, echoes, a century earlier, the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in lower Manhattan, where immigrant girls working in a sweatshop were forced to work behind locked doors, and had no means of escape. Eyewitnesses reported the horrific sight of girls leaping to their deaths from high windows to escape the flames. In the 21st century Westerners are looking, in emerging nations, at a mirror image of themselves a century earlier; outsourcing greed to the Third World may give an illusion of distance, but we are all implicated.

Finally, our co-editor, University Professor Robert Drummond, provides an astute and thoughtful Conclusion to the collection, from a social science perspective, but in the final analysis effecting a fruitful merging of social science and humanism. As he remarks, "Social scientists can tell us what happens, and they hope often to be able to tell us why. But it takes artists and novelists to help us understand how it 'feels.'" In keeping with the conference theme, he builds bridges between disciplines, moving in his synthesis from interdisciplinarity to pluridisciplinarity.

To break the cycle of history, not to repeat its worst excesses, is too vast a project for a single Colloquium or book. This collection of papers is tempered with modesty and humor, but it is our hope that the varied personalities that emerge, both in person and in writing, have taken a major first step towards tolerance, understanding, and, in a word, Pluri-Culturalism.