

Winter 2012

Franco-American Cultures in a New World Perspective

Jonathan Gosnell

Smith College, jgosnell@smith.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.smith.edu/frn_facpubs



Part of the [French and Francophone Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gosnell, Jonathan, "Franco-American Cultures in a New World Perspective" (2012). French Studies: Faculty Publications, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
https://scholarworks.smith.edu/frn_facpubs/10

This Article has been accepted for inclusion in French Studies: Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Smith ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@smith.edu

Franco-American Cultures in a New World Perspective

Jonathan Gosnell, Smith College

Over forty prominent novelists from around the world signed a media petition in 2007 expressing their support for a new cosmopolitan definition of literature written in French. Rejecting the categorization “francophone” as devaluing, they demanded recognition of a “littérature-monde en français,” a world literature in French attentive to new voices from the postcolony, or what in this essay I will call a “worldly” literature in French. A book quickly emerged following the manifesto, reassembling petitioners and rearticulating their positions, which call into question the French republican narrative.¹ In it they ask: Is French cultural production too narrowly defined? In response, scholars have organized conferences and special journal issues to further explore this broad conception of French literature.²

If writers, journalists, and even politicians have made much ado over the “littérature-monde en français” debate, it is because what is at issue is how French culture and identity are to be defined in the twenty-first century. “Official” French culture has typically emanated from narrow channels in Paris, from the metropolitan seat of power and prestige. For this reason, it is significant that Parisian literary circles have begun to recognize French cultural production from outside the establishment in the recent decades. Can French literatures from without transform the way in which French and francophone culture is conceived? This question is part of an ongoing and lively debate, one that includes the *littérature-monde* discussion. In my study of Franco-American literatures and cultures, a New-World phenomenon within the French postcolonial realm, I will suggest that written texts challenge underlying assumptions about *la Francophonie* and francophone studies, two ambiguous and often distinct entities. They also call

into question the meaning of French culture more broadly. A more worldly conception of culture can provide a framework for understanding obscure and often ambiguously francophone literatures—works that fall outside the accepted corpus of texts that make up the French canon. I examine cultural production from an often forgotten corner of the French-speaking world: francophone North America, an area that is just now beginning to receive more scholarly attention. My essay focuses specifically on the diasporic French and francophone cultures of Quebec and New England, with less attention paid to Louisiana. A fully developed conception of “littérature-monde en français” ought to recognize the work that writers from these cultures have contributed in the four centuries since French settlers first came to the North American continent.

Recent scholarly works point to a growing interest in francophone North America. In 2007 a special issue of *The French Review* explored French influence in the United States³ and in 2009 in the journal *Contemporary French and francophone Studies*, Marvin Richards made a case for putting studies of French presence in North America on the metaphorical map.⁴ In these studies diasporic populations and cultures of North America are positioned quite interestingly between French and francophone; they are souvenirs of a French past in the New World dating back to the sixteenth century and a twenty-first century francophone and American present and future. This new interest in Franco-America extends beyond scholarly investigations to the teaching of language and culture. Two current intermediate French language textbooks, *Pause-Café* and *Réseau*, situate “Franco-America” on the literal map of the greater francophone world, which can help inform American students about French influence in the New World outside of Quebec and Louisiana, areas with which they are likely to be already familiar.⁵ *Heritages francophones* is another current French text that specifically explores the diversity at the heart of lives lived in French in the United States.⁶

A definition of the terms relating to North American French and francophone cultures is necessary for the purposes of clarity. Readers will find French and francophone, French-Canadian, Franco-American as well Franco-America used throughout this essay. Franco-America is a place found on no map but one that exists in the minds of some people of French descent in Canada and the United States.⁷ It is a place in which French heritage is acknowledged and where residents can still express elements of cultural life. The French came to the New World with Cartier, Champlain, and other explorers in the seventeenth century.⁸ A few remained, built homes and towns, and raised large families. Allan Greer argues that spectacular reproduction is largely responsible for continued French presence in North America today.⁹ People who became known as *canadiens français*—and later *québécois*—left the impoverished province in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in search of work and better lives. Acadians were forced into exile much earlier, in the mid eighteenth century, and some settled in Louisiana. Almost a million people left Quebec between 1840 and 1930 and settled in New England, from Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts south to Connecticut and New York State, where they worked in the textile mills.¹⁰ They arrived as French-Canadians but became progressively Franco-Americans. By 1900, French-Canadian immigrants to the United States began to call themselves Franco-Americans in newspaper articles and novels. They created French ethnic neighborhoods, “les Petits Canadas,” where a growing sense of self could be cultivated. A constructed notion of Franco-American identity, shaped most notably by French language and Catholic faith, emerged in their recorded stories of material and cultural survival, of *survivance*, as it is called in Franco-American circles.

Franco-Americans, or Francos more intimately, are known also as the “French” of industrial New England; they lived in the “French” neighborhood and attended the “French”

church. Some today are French-speaking, francophone both linguistically as well as historically, by way of France's particular colonial trajectory. For others the French connection has largely disappeared. The Franco-American experience is a familiar immigrant experience in many ways, similar to that of other hyphenated American groups juggling cultural preservation and assimilation throughout the twentieth century. The cultures of "les Petits Canadas" of New England, however, are far less well known than the Little Italies or Chinatowns of the American urban landscape. Reading Franco-American cultures within the scope of a world literature in French will perhaps help rescue them from their ethnic ghetto and academic isolation.

On 16 March 2007, during the *Salon du livre* in Paris, forty-four writers made a plea for a change in the cultural status quo in France's center-left daily newspaper *Le Monde*, denouncing French (i.e., Parisian) culture as a dominant force either blind or patronizing toward cultural production beyond France's economic, political, and intellectual center. That previous fall, several of the most prestigious literary prizes went to authors who choose to write in French but for whom French is not their native language: Léonora Miano and Alain Mabanckou (Africa), Jonathan Littell (US) and Nancy Huston (Canada). That trend continued later in 2007 when Vietnamese novelist Linda Lê was awarded the Femina and Médicis Prizes. In the lengthy manifesto published in *Le Monde*, novelists refused the marginalization that too often came with being labeled and marketed as francophone authors. Non-colonial, white authors like Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco have had no problem making it onto bookstore shelves as "French" authors. "Fin de la francophonie," *littérature-monde* advocates proclaimed, "[e]t naissance d'une littérature-monde en français."¹¹ Signees included many prominent francophone writers such as Tahar Ben Jelloun, Maryse Condé, Édouard Glissant, Jacques Godbout, Nancy Huston, Dany

Laferrière, J.M.G. Le Clézio, Amin Maalouf, Alain Mabanckou, Erik Orsenna, and Gisèle Pineau.

The *littérature-monde* manifesto prompted a quick rejoinder from Organisation internationale de la francophonie (OIF) General Secretary Abdou Diouf in a view point published four days later, also in *Le Monde*. Clearly feeling his organization under attack, he replied:

Nous partageons tous le même éclatant et stimulant constat, à savoir que diverses sont aujourd'hui les littératures de langue française. Mais vous me permettrez de vous faire irrespectueusement remarquer que vous contribuez dans ce manifeste, avec toute l'autorité que votre talent confère à votre parole, à entretenir le plus grave des contresens sur la francophonie, en confondant francocentrisme et francophonie, en confondant exception culturelle et diversité culturelle.¹²

The OIF has devoted its energies to the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, French diversity expressly, in opposition to American-led globalization. Critics, however, have labeled this promotion of French as an old form of imperialism in a new bottle. The authors of the *littérature-monde* movement contend that their novels and essays, which convey francophone cultures from several continents, represent equally valid expressions of *French* literature. But as Dominic Thomas has suggested, this group of authors may themselves contribute to a new kind of cultural hegemony.¹³ While their national origins vary, they are all well-established authors whose works are published almost exclusively in France. Thomas remarks notable omissions from the movement, such as Beur literature, the contemporary texts written by novelists of North African descent born in France. One could argue that much the same thing has happened to Franco-American literature. The Franco-American cultures examined here, after all, are certainly

located well outside the French literary establishment. Yet they represent authentic and rather uncommon examples of worldly experiences from the French postcolony. The American continent and cultures have been marked profoundly by French influence, even mid-America and farther west, asserts historian Jay Gitlin, author of a recent monograph *The Bourgeois Frontier*.¹⁴ Cultural geographers Dean Louder and Éric Waddell have been influential in helping to publicize the “French fact” in America.¹⁵ This fact, recorded in Franco-American literatures and cultures of North America, will be explored in further detail in the remainder of this essay.

Transcribing *La Franco-Américanie*

Has the last French-language novel of the French experience in the United States been written, the last piece of fiction or non-fiction *en français* expressing the life and culture of diasporic French groups? There have been several such “lasts” identified over the final decades of the twentieth century as people of French descent and cultural traditions have disappeared into the American melting pot. The answer, however, is no, if one considers an active contemporary author like Normand Beaupré. Critics wondered if the end of a French era had been reached when Beaupré published *Le Petit Mangeur de fleurs* in 1999.¹⁶ It is an intensely personal coming of age memoir in French, as well as a sometimes stinging portrayal of Franco-American life. Since 1999, Beaupré has written more novels in French, some published in Canada and some more recently in the United States.¹⁷ Fifteen years earlier, Robert Perreault’s *L’Héritage* (1983) received similar critical attention as the first Franco-American novel written in French in half a century.¹⁸ Both Perreault and Beaupré describe the lives and labors of French-Canadian immigrants who settled in mill towns in New England in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Quebec was their first stop after the transatlantic voyage from France, continuing on to industrial

America by foot, horse, and train, like thousands of other immigrants in the same period. Many remained there permanently, establishing lives, businesses, and organizations.¹⁹

The novelists cited above indicate that while French-Canadians assimilated like other immigrant populations, they retained French cultural traditions. The National Materials Development Center for French in New Hampshire published Perreault's novel in a broad effort to recognize and preserve ethnic identity in a rapidly changing United States. In comparison to Parisian publishing houses of course, this was a tiny and now defunct effort to print literature from the French postcolonial diaspora. The last Franco-American newspaper written entirely in French for the French speakers of New England—the monthly “Journal de Lowell” of Massachusetts—ceased printing in 1995, a decade after publication of Perreault's *L'Héritage*. This is likely a more definitive *last* edition of the traditional Franco-American newspaper, given the difficulties experienced by the written press in the Internet age. A French ethnic press had existed for a century, with daily editions in several different mill towns in New England.²⁰ They are not as easily found now, although municipal public libraries, such as the city of Boston's, contain valuable collections of foreign language ethnic presses.

In the South of Franco-America, in Louisiana, one also finds indigenous French cultures in decline. Nothing will likely come close to matching the production of Creole elites in nineteenth-century New Orleans who created a rich cultural life in the Crescent City. After a century-long run, “L'Abeille de la Nouvelle-Orléans,” the city's French-language newspaper, ceased production in 1925. To this day, however, Cajun and Creole writers continue to transcribe postcolonial French cultures of the American South, through verse notably.²¹ Some thirty years ago, Revon Reed's *Lâche pas la patate* (1976) and Jean Arceneaux's *Cris sur le bayou* (1980) represented a watershed in Cajun and Creole expression and identity affirmation.²² Publication in

French continues (*Les Cahiers du Tintamarre*) as do the linguistic and cultural programs of the Conseil pour le développement du français en Louisiane (CODOFIL). Public and private university French programs support lively regional francophone cultures of Louisiana.

These “lasts” are reflective of the gradually dwindling numbers of French heritage speakers in the United States, on the Gulf Coast and in New England particularly. Each successive census from the last four decades on has shown a decline in the numbers of people who claim to regularly speak French at home. Louisiana’s francophone population, for example, has fallen in this period from roughly a quarter of a million to under 200,000 people in 2000. New England states like Maine have fewer numbers of self-identifying French speakers, but a higher percentage of them than Louisiana (in comparison to English speakers). French speakers still outnumber Spanish speakers in New Hampshire, Maine, and Louisiana (according to the 2000 census), but probably not for long. The French-speaking population in the United States is rapidly aging and younger generations are for the most part monolingual, English speakers.

As French cultures in the United States become increasingly endangered, the “littérature-monde en français” debate offers a rationale for the preservation of their written record. They offer evidence of perhaps no longer always living, but no less richly varied French and francophone cultures outside of France. Many literatures of the world written in French from the far-reaching periphery are not “world literatures,” with appeal outside the sphere of French influence, but rather local phenomena reflecting degrees of Frenchness in the postcolonial period. As novelist Alain Mabanckou asserts, it is through the writing from the periphery of the francophone realm, one that is not uniformly or fluently French-speaking, that some sense of a universal, human thread can be woven: “Et c’est là précisément qu’intervient la littérature-monde, celle qui fonde les complicités au-delà des continents, des nationalités, des catéchismes

et de l'arbre généalogique pour ne retenir que le clin d'œil que se font deux créateurs que tout semblait éloigner dès le départ....”²³ These complicities extend to those who talk about the world through a French-colored lens.

While the term may have been minted only recently (1992), *littérature-monde en français* is certainly not a new phenomenon.²⁴ Nor is it the first to separate the French language from the nation-state. While the 16 March 2007 manifesto brought media attention to the concept, the “world” has been writing in French for some time, since French power—represented by absolute monarchs, Napoléon Bonaparte, and colonial empire for instance—made French culture international through conquest and influence. The New World has certainly been involved in this production. Well after Samuel de Champlain and associates established *la Nouvelle-France* in the seventeenth century, native or Creole French born in the New World have written about their American experiences in Canada, the Caribbean, and the United States. These writings add new complexities to the term *American*, by introducing Franco perspectives. They serve to expand notions of Frenchness, which until most recently, during French opposition to the American-led war in Iraq, seemed hostilely opposed to American culture. Alexis de Tocqueville and more contemporary thinkers such as Pierre Bourdieu have noted inherent competition and tension between French and American universalist cultural models. Franco-Americans of New England, as well as the United States government, offer tribute to neighboring Quebec in a monument erected along the banks of the St. Lawrence River, just south of Quebec City, where the French began their colonial experiment in the New World four hundred years ago (Figure 1). It stands as a tribute to the French Canadian populations and cultures that traveled south and established themselves in the United States. Like many Franco-American monuments, it is easily passed

over, hidden within the landscape and largely unseen. Its existence nonetheless is an acknowledgment of the diversity of worldly French and francophone cultures.

Figure 1. Bilingual monument honoring America's French heritage, erected in 2008



Source: Author's photograph

Writing about French cultural life in America offered settler populations an opportunity to describe a world in which largely marginal groups gained greater recognition. In fiction and non-fiction, there was a constant flow, a continual exchange between *le vieux continent* and the New (French) World. Franco-American authors and editors were born in France, Quebec, and the United States. They wrote in French as well as in English, though more often in English as the twentieth century advanced. Today their writings and their reading publics are located on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. In the postcolonial period, France is not a frequent stopover on this Franco-American exchange (it is more a distant memory and symbolically relevant), yet Franco-Americans today continue to talk specifically about themselves and the spaces that they occupy as “French.”

A Franco-American identity was first articulated in the French-language, ethnic press of New England. It is inscribed, for instance, in several titles of early nineteenth-century papers, in Fall River and Fitchburg, Massachusetts.²⁵ Most were filled with information about life in Quebec, about the society and people that French-Canadian immigrants had left behind in their move to the United States. They indicate how the population from Quebec evolved culturally during migration and resettlement. Some of the more widely read dailies included *L'Étoile* of Lowell, Massachusetts, *Le Messager* of Lewiston, Maine and *L'Avenir national* of Manchester, New Hampshire. *Le Travailleur* of Worcester, Massachusetts, a weekly publication, was the most important assertively Franco-American cultural paper. It was founded in 1874 by Ferdinand Gagnon, a staunch objector to American assimilation. Gagnon remains an imposing figure, although he is relatively unknown outside the Franco-American cultural elite. The paper he

founded, *Le Travailleur*, began a second phase in 1931 under the helm of Wilfred Beaulieu, who directed it until 1978 and continued to espouse the ideals of “la Survivance française.”

Franco-American newspapers were the first to bring works of fiction to the attention of readers. The first Franco-American novel, *Jeanne la fileuse*, written in 1878 by Honoré Beaugrand, appeared in segments in the Fall River, Massachusetts newspaper *L'Echo du Canada*, before being published as a whole.²⁶ The writer and journalist Beaugrand was born in Quebec but stationed in Fall River among other places in the French Atlantic world.²⁷ His novel depicts life in the textile mills, and as Beaugrand claimed in his preface it was a response to the critics of emigration. He rejected the notion that it was social outcasts who left Quebec, “la canaille qui s'en va.” Interestingly, Beaugrand challenged Ferdinand Gagnon to a duel for having abandoned the ideal of repatriation. (The duel never took place.) For lay and religious elites, migration was a highly sensitive issue as more than 30 percent of the Quebec population had left the impoverished province in search of jobs.²⁸ Beaugrand's ideas as expressed in the novel are fairly nuanced, in fact. While the protagonist Jeanne and her husband ultimately return to a traditional way of life in Quebec, her brother Jules remains in Fall River as did many Franco-Americans. Some became simply American without any culturally distinctive prefix.

Canuck, a story of factory life in Lowell, Massachusetts, provides an account of Franco-American life in the twentieth century. It was published in 1936 by Camille Lessard-Bissonnete and first saw print in serial form in Lewiston's *Le Messager*.²⁹ Canuck is a pejorative label for French-Canadians and can be added to the Franco-American vocabulary noted earlier. True to her name, the protagonist of the story, Victoria (Vic), is successful in establishing a new American life. Through her determined efforts she succeeds, despite the torment of French-Canadian immigrants who arrived before her and treat her as an inferior Canuck. Vic overcomes

the daily violence of an overbearing father, the death of one brother, and personal sacrifice to put another brother through seminary, ultimately obtaining emancipation and a cherished financial independence. Vic takes her place among other freshly autonomous demoiselles of Lowell. As a young Franco-American woman with resources, one of the first things that Vic does to further her prospects is enroll in evening English classes.³⁰ This is suggestive of changes that would take place throughout Franco-America. *Canuck* is certainly no literary masterpiece, and is thus uncomfortably included in the *littérature-monde* category as defined by the cited “44” francophone luminaries. It does reveal pertinent elements of Franco-American life, although this has sometimes been the bane of francophone literature, more often cited for sociological than for literary value. There are, however, other Franco-American texts that are more elegantly crafted.

The Franco-American novel also extends geographically beyond New England. The genre encompasses classic works of Québécois literature from the early part of the twentieth century, the so-called “romans de la terre,” which frequently cross the border into the lower States, as we will see below. Franco-American literature invites readers into the southernmost reaches of America’s French expanses, into the bayou country of Louisiana. The story of the Acadians or Cajuns is perhaps the most evocative of the Franco-American odyssey, and 1979 Prix Goncourt winner Antonine Maillet’s *Pélagie-la-charette* is exemplary.³¹ After forced expulsion from Nova Scotia, separated from lands, dwellings, and families, and dispersed along the eastern coastline of North America, Acadians are left to wander like biblical folk in search of “home.” Pélagie, heroine of the narrative, leads the expelled back to their ancestral land, to their paradise lost, Grand Pré (Nova Scotia). “Quelle femme, cette Pélagie! Capable à elle seule de ramener un peuple au pays.”³² Toward the end of her sojourn, and near death, Pélagie looks behind her to witness that her fellow wanderers had become a people, “son peuple.”³³ Despite

the return “home,” Pélagie points to a sensibility linking uprooted and displaced Acadians along the Atlantic seaboard.

Antonine Maillet presents an interesting turn from traditional French Canadian rootedness that readers observe elsewhere. In *Maria Chapdelaine*, for instance, she writes: “We have been here for three hundred years and have remained. Our prayers and our songs brought overseas are the same....” So expresses the voice of French Quebec, the voice that ultimately convinces *Maria Chapdelaine* (1913), heroine of the quintessential French Canadian “roman de la terre,” to remain true to her roots:

Nous sommes venus il y a trois cents ans, et nous sommes restés.... Nous avons apporté d’outre-mer nos prières et nos chansons: elles sont toujours les mêmes.

Nous avons apporté dans nos poitrines le cœur des hommes de notre pays, vaillant et vif, aussi prompt à la pitié qu’au rire, le cœur le plus humain de tous les cœurs humains: il n’a pas changé. Nous avons marqué un plan du continent nouveau, de Gaspé à Montréal, de Saint-Jean d’Iberville à l’Ungava, en disant: ici toutes les choses que nous avons apportées avec nous, notre culte, notre langage, nos vertus et jusqu’à nos faiblesses deviennent des choses sacrées, intangibles et qui devront demeurer jusqu’à la fin.³⁴

Maria is tempted to leave the land so laboriously toiled by her ancestors, the land that proved so costly to her own family and friends, for the “bright lights” of industrial America.³⁵ She realizes in time, however, that this would constitute treason to elites such as Beaugrand, a betrayal of French colonial efforts begun some three hundred (four hundred now) years ago. She opts to marry the staid but steady tiller of the soil Eutrope Gagnon. The French colonial stakes in North

America are clearly evident in this novel from the early twentieth century, written by a Frenchman who transported readers considerably beyond the geographic confines of Quebec.

We see in many such traditional *Québécois* novels from the twentieth century an affirmation of the vitality of French traditions in North America. People of French origin, their lives lived in French, had survived against all odds. Frenchness appears to be clawing or clinging to the continent. These stories bristle with a trenchant, sometimes jarring nationalism for contemporary readers. Maria remains French-Canadian with a serenity that practically opposes the defiant tone in *Menaud, maître draveur* (1937), another classic from the Quebec literary canon by Félix-Antoine Savard.³⁶ Menaud is determined to fight to preserve French presence in North America. “Un peuple qui ne sait mourir” claims Menaud who takes inspiration while reading lines from *Maria Chapdelaine* (“Nous sommes venus il y a 300 ans et nous sommes restés...”). This statement, repeated throughout the novel, is a call to arms. The protagonist Menaud is profoundly offended by the arrival of foreigners “chez lui” who threaten to become its masters.³⁷ He objects to being pushed off land settled by his French ancestors and attempts to organize a peasant revolt. He refuses to allow his daughter Marie to marry the sell-out le Délié, to whom she has been promised. Marie, moved by the patriotism of her father, can only choose the brave and loyal Lucon as her mate, provoking the jealous outrage of the rejected le Délié. Both Marie and Lucon follow Menaud in his battle against the powerful outside Anglophone forces that corrupt le Délié. Marie, like Maria Chapdelaine before her, embodies French-Canadian or early Franco-American resistance. Gerard Bouchard, in his comparative historical works, asks why such fierce resistance did not lead to the founding of an independent French nation in North America, as happened in Spanish or English-speaking nations.³⁸ This question

formed the basis of the nationalist scholar's work, and it served to fuel the ongoing polemic of Québécois autonomy.

In *Trente arpents* (1938), Ringuet discusses the American chapter in French diasporic life in more detail.³⁹ In this third classic example, sacred land can nourish the soul and the physical needs of its people; but man removed from this soil, which cannot sustain everyone, is no longer as unwaveringly French. This again highlights French Canadian distinction from the errant Acadian experience. French language and culture, defined very much in ethnic terms, tend to fade on foreign soil. This sums up the life experiences of *habitant* Euchariste Moisan, whose story is recounted in *Trente Arpents*. Moisan conveys the challenges that face French efforts to trace their designs on American soil. Despite a lifetime of agricultural work and careful stewardship of the land, no such sympathy can be returned. "... La terre était immuable et insensible, sans tendresse comme sans compassion."⁴⁰ Moisan watches with dismay as his favorite son Ephrem leaves the land to seek work in the textile mills of New England. Ironically and tragically, Moisan himself is obliged to leave Quebec and his cherished thirty arpents of land because of difficulties on the farm. Far from the affirming presence of the soil, he is akin to the proverbial fish out of water in industrial America. The closest Moisan comes to feeling himself is while cultivating a small garden when living at his son's home. By contrast, Franco-American texts *Jeanne la fileuse* and *Canuck* assert with greater confidence that in some New England towns immigrants were in fact able to reconstitute distinctly French cultural communities within tightly knit urban and ethnic enclaves.

These are French stories of survival but also of sentimental, visceral love of one's country, of a *patrie* created in the New World. Franco-American literature is a transnational literature, transcending borders, reminding readers of the wide-ranging French "nation" in North

America, of French descendants who settled in many parts of America and who preserved French cultures. In several different texts, we find the same French cultural traditions practiced in Quebec, New England or Louisiana. Yet the French nation must scrape for survival because the French lost on the Plains of Abraham in 1759. What remains of the former French empire in North America, as Louder and Waddell have argued, are obscure and scattered islands adrift in an Anglo sea that is predominantly landbound.⁴¹ The French nation of America is most certainly an imagined community inspired in part by the written word, by works such as *Maria Chapdelaine* and Longfellow's emblematic *Evangeline*. As such, Franco-America is both powerfully felt yet fragile. Not even greater recognition through the lens of a widely encompassing French literature of the world will likely change the status of the Franco-American experience.

Cultural Fissures and Fault Lines

The discovery of unpublished works by Jack Kerouac, the most acclaimed American author of French-Canadian descent, raises interesting questions about contemporary Franco-American cultures and Kerouac's own publishing language and literary domain. A brief novel written in French by the Beat Generation author was recently discovered in the archives of the New York Public Library, after having spent a half-century there.⁴² *Sur le Chemin* is the only significant piece of prose by Kerouac written first in French. Kerouac wrote it rapidly in Mexico City in 1952, before going on to write the similarly titled but distinct *On the Road* in 1957, which not only attained cult status but transformed the life of the struggling Franco-American author.⁴³ Kerouac grew up speaking French in his working-class French-Canadian neighborhood of Lowell, Massachusetts. Massachusetts had more Franco-Americans and a richer Franco-

American cultural life than any other New England state.⁴⁴ Kerouac's counter-culture associations and publications have, however, obfuscated his francophone origins. In *Sur le Chemin*, he tells the story of French-Canadian roadsters in New York, writing in the local "Lowellois" vernacular from his neighborhood, in both dialogue and narration. It is a transcription to the written page of a predominantly oral form of French. The subsequently published *On the Road* is not an English translation of *Sur le Chemin*, despite the recurring themes.⁴⁵ Kerouac later translated his short novel as *Old Bull in the Bowery*, which remained unpublished as well.

A broad conception of francophone or world literature in French might include an author such as Kerouac, posthumously, now that he has been discovered "en français." His French and English-language works can certainly help to identify Franco-America as part of the greater francophone world. Franco-American author David Plante has suggested that the quintessentially American *On the Road* might be read in actuality as a *Franco-American* narrative.⁴⁶ Kerouac had always hoped to write (and publish) a great American novel in French (presumably a considerably longer text). He never realized this aspiration, but several of his works can be considered Franco-American in terms of their subject matter, setting, characters, and language. Portions of dialogue sequences in novels such as *Doctor Sax* (1959) are written in the French *joual* of Lowell along with the English narration.⁴⁷ Other mill towns with a large Franco-American presence such as Manchester, New Hampshire arguably had their own distinct French dialect (see Perreault's *L'Héritage*) and cultures. For one reviewer in the Franco-American press, Kerouac's first book, *The Town and City* (1950) did not refer enough to French postcolonial presence in New England, although the novel is often identified as a part of Kerouac's Franco-

American or Lowell series.⁴⁸ The particular reviewer in question clearly wanted more recognition of Franco-American cultures and cultural life.

These works highlight the precariousness of French literature in the francophone world. The French disappearing act has certainly been at work in the United States in the last century, as the contours of French as a living language have shrunk. Yet Jack Kerouac provides an example of the important connection between French language and English-language literatures of the French experience in North America. The Franco-American literature typified by Kerouac is one of evolving French diasporic populations and cultures. The transitional period during the Second World War, when French expression shifted increasingly to English in Franco-American communities, is particularly revealing. The Second World War era represents the most important moment of cultural transition in Franco-American life. Since then, English has become the primary vehicle for Franco-American written cultures, with the occasional forays into French.

This English language transition, nonetheless, must be qualified. French Canadian expressions and ideas are still found within many works written primarily in English. Much English-language, Franco-American writing is highly personal, and the personal leads authors invariably back in one form or another to an *original Frenchness* that is both stated and understood. In French or English, autobiographical fiction is the genre of choice in Franco-American literature, addressing concerns about cultural, social, economic, and political realities. One of the criticisms *littérature-monde* supporters level is that metropolitan French literature is too infatuated with itself and with literary theory, and is too disengaged from the world. Without leaving its navel, Franco-American literature depicts a transnational and intercultural voyage from Old to New World, from the North of the American continent to the South, from French to English and in between. Authors from the francophone world are capable of creating complex

fictive realms in French, or capturing a sense of cultural moments as they once were, even with stylistic flair.

Contemporary Franco-American writing is peppered with French sayings, thoughts, prayers, songs, and recipes from either an idealized or maligned individual past. It is filled with original characters, voices, and culture. Whether one loved or hated one's French past, it rises back to the surface in prose. In two recent Franco-American novels, *Forgive me Father for I have Sinned* (2005) and *Thy Will be done* (2006), Dr. Louise S. Appell recounts the life of a French Canadian family in Northampton, Massachusetts during the Depression and Second World War.⁴⁹ While family members have largely become assimilated, some continue to maintain the traditional French-Canadian ways and those too eager to reject these customs altogether are the subject of ridicule. Both novels are self-published, and in the author's note Appell mentions the Franco-American demand in western Massachusetts for the telling of a familiar story. Appell herself is a local girl of French-Canadian descent, born Louise Fortier, who attended Northampton's Smith College. She asks her readers to believe that while mostly English words are inscribed on the pages, it is actually French that is being spoken by the characters. This is an interactive and figurative sort of francophone literature. The French that does make its way into the dialogue is sometimes incorrect. Its presence in the text, nonetheless, is a demonstration of French identity preserved within Franco-American cultures.

The publications of newspaper editor and author Jacques Ducharme indicate the cultural transformations that took place seventy years ago, on the eve of the Second World War. In 1939, he published *The Delusson Family*, a fictional account in English of a Franco-American family in Holyoke, Massachusetts.⁵⁰ *The Delusson Family* tells the French version of the American Dream, a rags to riches tale in industrial America that mirrors the trajectory of his own family.

Socio-economically, culturally, and geographically, the Delusson family had moved up the hill, to the higher, more rarified, Anglo air at the heights of Holyoke. Ducharme acknowledged the sharp criticism that his writing in English, a result of this multilayered migration, aroused within the traditional Franco elite. The latter regarded it as a betrayal of his fathers and forefathers, for whom *la survivance*, French cultural survival in Anglo America, was paramount.

English is also the means of communication in *The Shadows of the Trees*, a non-fictional travel log of the Franco-American experience Ducharme published four years later.⁵¹ Here the author immediately establishes Franco-Americans as an ethnic group, a claim that he never formally articulated in *The Delusson Family*. Backtracking a bit, he claims that it will take time for the descendants of the French and Americans to fuse culturally, despite the fact that French-Canadian immigrants had been self-identifying as Franco-Americans in the United States for almost a half-century. At the very moment that the term emerges in Ducharme's writing, its meaning is shifting. He writes, "The Franco-Americans, exiles or émigrés as the case may be, have adopted the American way.... The final half of the word Franco-American is all that matters, and allegiance is given where it is asked."⁵² As illustrated by the cover of Manchester, New Hampshire's daily French newspaper, *L'Avenir National*, the pressure to demonstrate one's American patriotism had intensified during the First World War, particularly on the Fourth of July.

Figure 2. *L'Avenir National*, 3 juillet 1914. Published 1895 to 1949



Source: Author's photograph.

While writing books in English, Jacques Ducharme also wrote editorials in French, further demonstrating the fluctuating, hybrid nature of Franco-American identity at the time. For a brief period in 1940, Ducharme edited the weekly French language newspaper of Holyoke, Massachusetts, *La Justice*, founded in 1904. He had attained some notoriety within the Franco-American community as author of *The Delusson Family*, which newspaper officials hoped would mean increased readership of *La Justice*. In his first column as editor, Ducharme wrote “notre devise de Canadiens-Français reste toujours la même: ‘Langue, Foi, Traditions,’ car dans cette

trinité se trouve l'essence de notre personnalité, de notre survivance."⁵³ French language, Catholic faith, and both religious and secular traditions are still important components of Franco-American identity. It is noteworthy that Ducharme addresses the question of cultural traditions and *survivance* in French here while writing elsewhere in English. His explanation is nuanced: "Survivance, ce n'est pas simplement dire notre persistance comme entité ethnique. Survivance, c'est plutôt dire l'existence éternelle de notre caractère. Nous sommes un mélange de France, de Canada et des États-Unis...."⁵⁴ He notes the particularly French strategies of cultural accommodation on the ground, middle-grounding, a euphemism for French tolerance and integration of other cultures. In this instance, writings from the francophone periphery echo a French worldly or cosmopolitan perspective on cultural hybridity.

Ducharme's regular, concise editorials continued to be written in French, but his statement above previews the subtle changes made during his tenure, which included the launching of a column on Franco-American life in English. His writing career underlined the fact that second generation Franco-Americans were certainly no longer monolingually French like their parents and were rather increasingly Americanized. Holyoke's half-century old paper, *La Justice*, would continue to circulate weekly in French into the 1950s and monthly until the 1960s, but Ducharme himself had become an Anglophone writer of Franco-America. His real and metaphoric children, of the pivotal third generation, are even more fully Americanized, English speakers. This does not mean that Franco-Americans today are no longer francophone, or French-speaking. It depends in part on one's definition of francophone, which the *littérature-monde* movement rightly calls into question. Franco-American novelists evoke what remains in the wake of historic French influence in North America. They are not the only marginal or marginally French-speaking "francophone" group of authors. A Franco-American corpus of text

that *is* organically French, but not necessarily always written in the language of Molière, reveals important aspects of francophone cultural identity in North America. Franco-American literature in any idiom is far from monolingual and very much intercultural in scope. As I have argued, these works translate an obscure Francophone life and culture in America and trace the continental drift of French groups from France to New France to Franco-America. Lost in migration and assimilation, Franco-Americans are sometimes omitted in the documentation of francophone organizations such as the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF). As stated earlier, the OIF has positioned itself ideologically, in opposition to dominant American culture. From this perspective, leaving Franco-Americans out of the picture could be seen as counter-productive: what better strategy than to identify what is francophone at the heart of imperial America?⁵⁵

Further complicating the issue of Franco-American identity is the fact that many authors frequently did their best to forget their French heritage. Novelist Rhea Côté Robbins wrote in virtual space (her Facebook wall), “Born French. Went away. Back home.”⁵⁶ Like many Franco-Americans of her generation, preserving culture was not on her priority list when she was a young woman in search of herself. Later in life, she began to fear what gets lost in translation culturally when a heritage language is abandoned by groups adapting to life in a new country. In *Wednesday’s Child* (1997), unattractive, working-class feet do not allow Côté Robbins to leave behind her French past entirely for the pure English identity and sensibility that she admires.⁵⁷ She blames her father, who identified inexpensive shoes as the cause of his foot deformation, but notes that her mother’s were no beauties either. “A whole history of a people written on these ugly, ugly feet.”⁵⁸ The author reveals a wry Franco-American sense of humor, making light of sometimes difficult socio-economic conditions. She writes, tongue-in-cheek, that she was so

preoccupied with her feet that she took no notice of Woodstock and the social and cultural upheaval of the 1960s.

The fact that Rhea Côté Robbins' English prose is largely shaped by French is another part of this unconscious cultural remembering. "Perfect, present, future tense. In French. Everything in French. Even if it is in English, it is still in French. A layer of French living laid over by layers of popular culture or popular culture covered by living done in English. Intertwined."⁵⁹ Everything that matters in Côté Robbins' account *is* French, as it came to be defined in New England, the family stories, the heirlooms, the recipes, and the shame. Only the language is English although the author claims it is French-inflected. Coming back to French is part of becoming whole again, re-membering (or reconnecting with one's feet in Côté Robbins' case), and explains why many Franco-Americans, in Louisiana and New England, are informally trying to reclaim their ancestral French language practices.⁶⁰

David Plante, author of the memoir *American Ghosts* (2005) and one of the more esoteric Franco-American intellectuals, spent a good part of his life trying to lose his Frenchness, a cultural identity closely associated with the Catholic Church. French Catholic prayers and hymns are enduring rituals that punctuate Franco-American life. Yet in reaction to the perceived intractability of Church doctrine, a postcolonial French ethnic identity in North America went into a lengthy hibernation before resurfacing more recently. David Plante and others like him became ghosts, invisible. Losing their Frenchness is an attempt to shed this invisibility, a part of the reason that Plante became a writer, to try to render the invisible visible. For Plante, like Côté Robbins, it is, however, not so easy to forget. The French words from his *Premier livre de lecture* are etched eternally in his memory. In Plante's seventh grade classroom, the Mère Sainte

Flore had led recitations of the anthem “Ô Canada, terre de nos aïeux...” She told him and others “... the truth of the geography of North America,” of French discovery of America.⁶¹

To us, French meant French Canadian, for we were, in our parish, from France by way of French Canada, but at a time when Canada was called La Nouvelle France. Not one of us would have been able to make an ancestral connection beyond Canada to La Vieille France. Yet we called ourselves French in the way Italians in our school called themselves Italians....⁶²

In an attempt to become visible later in life, Plante tries to transform his parochial Canadian Frenchness into a more worldly French Frenchness (i.e., Parisian), through travel and the consumption of great literature.⁶³

The bicultural, Franco-American base from which David Plante writes is evident in *American Ghosts*. “Though I wrote in English,” he notes, “there remained within this language the baptized letters of my French religion, letters that always promised the invisible...”⁶⁴ As in Côté Robbins’ novel, French is omnipresent, albeit sometimes below the surface. The reference to invisibility in Plante’s passage reads as an indication of worldly suffering and eternal salvation. It is almost surprising that in Plante’s exploration of French invisibility in America, there is no implicit or explicit nod to African American novelist Ralph Ellison, author of *Invisible Man* (1952).⁶⁵ Plante does, however, evoke the *Nègres blancs d’Amérique* (1968) famously asserted by Pierre Vallières.⁶⁶ Being French in America to Plante equals being a “White Nigger,” a failure, a Canuck, incapable of success:

Why should I feel success in anything, when, as a Canuck, it was forgone that I would not succeed? ... We were the White Niggers, the Canucks, the people for whom this very term was thought up. We came down from Canada, from the forests of Canada, to the

states to do the jobs the blacks wouldn't do. And we did the jobs well; we performed our duties; we never complained, and there was no bitterness in us against injustices. We were invisible.”⁶⁷

He acknowledges the great difficulty that he had shaking the sense of being a loser, like the French in the transatlantic battle with England for power in the eighteenth century.

Today, people of French descent in the United States may know or care little about this heritage or being on the losing side of history. The century old term “Franco-American” carries little meaning for younger generations. Still, the possibility for discovery of what remains of French influence is important, and Franco-American written cultures are thus a valuable resource. The question of language, however, is problematic. Without an original language, without an authentic voice speaking with representative authority, cultures may risk erosion or diminution. This process has proven to be a protracted one in Franco-America, for some four hundred years and counting. There is something still palpably “French” about English and French-speaking Franco-Americans. The forgetting is still not yet complete. It is in the writing about self primarily, in the autobiographical fiction of Franco-American novels that the French essence is maintained, even in English examples. In a contemporary memoir like Fran Pelletier's *Little Pine to King Spruce* (2003), the author tells family stories through the conduit of English, as they were once told by parents and grandparents in French.⁶⁸ His stories include memorable characters like Baptiste Michaud, who speak English in French syntax and whose pronunciation is expressly French as well, with emphasis on the second syllable. “Pull you basTARDS,” he (lovingly) yells at his work horses. “PULL! YOU STOP NOW, I, BAPTISTE MICHAUD, KILL YOU ALL DEAD! Go-go-go-go!”⁶⁹ A republished, English-language novel like *Papa Martel* (2003), which examines Franco-American life between the two world wars, retells an old French

story of the past to new listeners or readers for whom this history is unknown and inaccessible in the heritage language.⁷⁰ The more recent *Lamoille Stories* (2008) provide a poignant portrayal of a lingering francophone cultures expressed through daily American life.⁷¹

French and francophone cultures forge links throughout the Atlantic world that bridge linguistic, geographic, demographic, and ethnic divides. The politics of *la Survivance*, of preserving French traditions, is responsible in some measure for the ties connecting contemporary Franco-American literature written in English to the classic French-language “romans de la terre” of early twentieth-century Quebec. Novels from the Québécois literary canon such as *Maria-Chapdelaine* tell the story of the development of a French-descended *race* in North America, an ethnic identification still present a century later. The Franco-American novels mentioned take up the story of migrant French Canadian factory workers in the United States and evoke the powerful desire of return (to Quebec), which remained an illusion for many. Physical borders may separate Quebec from New England, and French from English speakers for the most part, but culture knows no bounds. *Jeanne la fileuse* indicates the important role that train travel played in migratory fluxes and the development of a transnational Franco-American culture: “C’est au moyen des chemins de fer que l’on est parvenu à abolir en grande partie les préjugés ridicules et les haines séculaires qui existaient entre les races française et anglaise en Amérique.”⁷² Snow-shoers, members of Clubs des raquetteurs who trekked from New England to Quebec in winter, in the tradition of the French Canadian bush whackers or *coureur de bois*, represent a slower moving, but nonetheless border crossing Franco-American culture.⁷³

Despite the inevitable assimilation that transformed francophone communities in America, transnational French culture continued to be demonstrated through dance, music, and food. In *Maria-Chapdelaine* as well as the twenty-first century Franco-American text *Forgive*

me Father for I Have Sinned, people of French descent congregate to share a meal, a game, and a tune, to create community. “Veillées” are a staple of first French Canadian then Franco-American daily life, a community-shaping “divertissement” that perpetuated itself throughout Franco-America. (We see mention of this, for instance, in *Maria Chapdelaine* and *Canuck*.) *Trente Arpents* and *The Shadows of the Trees* indicate the presence of typical French Canadian dishes and recipes, “tourtière” and “soupe aux pois,” perpetuated by families on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border. Eating meat pie and pea soup can still identify you today as Franco-American in cities like Nashua, New Hampshire or Woonsocket, Rhode Island where French ethnic pockets remain. For the younger generations who are more removed from cultural traditions, calling your grandparents “Mémère” and “Pépère” at family meals can also indicate that you are part of the postcolonial francophone world.

In Franco-American literature, one observes how writers defined being French in the contemporary American context, and how French culture persisted despite assimilation and the onslaught of the English language. In order to survive in America, the French had to be clever, like legendary figure of lore “Ti-Jean.” He (like other Franco-Americans) maintained the *coureur de bois* audacity, an adventurous French spirit that borrowed extensively from indigenous, Native American cultures, and is mentioned in *Maria-Chapdelaine* and *The Delusson Family*. In Antonine Maillet’s *Pélagie-la-charette*, we find reference to an Acadian “Tit-Jean” and in *Trente Arpents*, a Québécois “Ti-Jean.” Ti-Jean, meaning Petit or Little John, is an everyman of French ancestry, capable of impressive feats despite his diminutive name and stature. In his varied and ever evolving adventures, “Ti-Jean” typically overcomes socio-economic disadvantage, defeats superior adversaries, and manages to attain the heights of power through deception and intrigue. He is no slave to power, however, and often fails to maintain it.

This reference to the Franco-American underdog is common—he is a French-Canadian and Creole heroic figure, a French transatlantic myth. Storytellers Julien Olivier and Michael Parent have assembled several “Ti-Jean” stories, as told from one Franco-American generation to another.⁷⁴ They are quite evocative of the French postcolonial struggle in North America, of the complex of the loser, Canuck, “White Nigger.” It is convenient that “Ti Jean” is Jack Kerouac’s nickname as well as his character name in *Sur le Chemin*. It is inscribed in parentheses on his tombstone in Lowell, Massachusetts, a reminder of his forgotten French origins.

Survivance

The story of Franco-American life in New England can be told in at least three languages, French, English, and hybrid Franglais. Each is a vehicle for communicating transnational francophone cultures. Even Franco-American writing in English remains true to the *Survivance* ideal, of acknowledging and preserving French cultural identity in Anglo-America. It is a postcolonial francophone literature, ever attentive to an evolving French experience in the New World. It evokes a distinct universe that included institutions like French ethnic schools and churches, newspapers, associations, and neighborhoods. A minor literature certainly in terms of art or influence, Franco-American writing is vital to understanding the French history of North America. North of the border, in intellectual circles of Quebec, the “américanité” debate continues to probe the uniqueness of Frenchness as defined in North America.⁷⁵ For some, being an American *à la française* is not a contradiction in terms, not even four hundred years after the founding of a French settlement in Quebec City, an anniversary that was lavishly celebrated in 2008. Prolific and original novelist Dany Laferrière, a contributor to the *littérature-monde*

movement, is arguably one of the most respected and *American* of contemporary francophone writers.

While Franco-American literature refers mostly to the past, the French present in the United States has not altogether disappeared. The Francophone” literatures examined in this essay demonstrate this phenomenon. The 2008 Nobel Prize winner for literature, transcultural author J.M.G. Le Clézio, points to a convergence of French and francophone, a “littérature-monde en français” in many senses of the word, yet French and Francophone continue to coexist independently. The 2007 French literary prize selection overall demonstrates a metropolitan cultural life that is still very much vital. William Cloonan rejects the constraints of a zero-sum cultural model, the idea of a poor, unimaginative French literature from the Hexagon, juxtaposed with a rich and creative Francophone literature.⁷⁶

While francophone authors have long sought inclusion and recognition, the authors of *Pour Une Littérature-monde* dwell on Franco-French distinctions, the reordering of the French world, and the problematic definitions of French, francophone, and *Francophonie*. They insist that it is French literature, a national literature, which must integrate international, francophone currents of artistic production. Yet perhaps even the notion of *littérature-monde* must be decolonized. I have attempted to demonstrate that Franco-American literatures and cultures constitute an intriguing narrative within a larger and often volatile francophone sphere. They offer not only glimpses of a fading yet influential French past, but also forms of cultural expression and representations of social realities that are important in their own terms, irrespective of their linkages to France. Franco-American literature, in short, has an important place in a truly decentered and decolonized *littérature-monde* by giving us access to the unusual realities of North American francophone experience.

Jonathan Gosnell has taught French language and contemporary culture at Smith College since 1996. He is the author of *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930–1954*, as well as articles that have appeared in the academic journals *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* (CSSAAME), *Contemporary French Civilization*, *French Cultural Studies*, and *The French Review*. He is currently working on a cultural history of diasporic French and francophone groups in the United States.

Notes

¹ Michel Le Bris, Jean Rouaud, *Pour une littérature-monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007).

² The Winthrop-King Institute for Contemporary French and francophone Studies at Florida State University held an international conference entitled “Littérature-Monde: New Wave or New Hype?” 12–14 February 2009. The 20th meeting of the Association des professeurs des littératures acadienne et québécoise de l’Atlantique (APLAQA) examined “Trajectoires et dérives de la littérature-monde,” 21–23 October 2010. Issues of the journals *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* and the *International Journal of Francophone Studies* are devoted to this subject. See the recent book edited by Alec Hargreaves, *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-Monde* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2010).

³ *The French Review* 80, 6 (May 2007).

⁴ Marvin Richards, “Putting Québec Studies on the Map,” *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 13, 1 (January 2009): 81–89.

⁵ Nora Megharbi et al., *Pause-Café* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009); Jean Marie Schultz and Marie-Paule Tranvouez, *Réseau* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010). Both texts locate francophone minorities not just in Louisiana but in New England as well.

⁶ J.C. Redonnet, R. St. Onge, S. St. Onge, and J. Nielsen, *Héritages francophones: Enquêtes interculturelles* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2010).

⁷ Dean Louder and Éric Waddell, *Franco-Amérique* (Sillery, QC: Septentrion, 2008).

⁸ For an excellent general and detailed history, see Gilles Havard and Cécile Vidal, *Histoire de l'Amérique française* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003).

⁹ Allan Greer, *The People of New France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 22, 26.

¹⁰ François Weil, *Les Franco-Américains* (Paris: Belin, 1989).

¹¹ Barbery, Ben Jelloun et al., “Pour Une ‘Littérature-Monde’ en français,” *Le Monde*, 16 March 2007.

¹² Abdou Diouf, “La Francophonie, une réalité oubliée,” *Le Monde*, 19 March 2007.

¹³ Dominic Thomas, “Decolonizing France: From National Literatures to World Literatures,” *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 14, 1 (January 2010): 47–55.

¹⁴ Jay Gitlin, *The Bourgeois Frontier: French Towns, French Traders and American Expansion* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2010).

¹⁵ Louder and Waddell, *Franco-Amérique*.

¹⁶ Normand Beaupré, *Le Petit Mangeur de fleurs* (Chicoutimi, QC: Les Editions JCL, 1999).

Francophone literature is of course alive and well in *la Belle Province*. The publishing houses of

Montreal and Quebec City have played a central role in the writing of the French experience in America.

¹⁷ See for instance Beaupré's *Deux Femmes, deux rêves* (Coral Springs, FL: Llumina Press, 2005).

¹⁸ Robert Perreault, *L'Héritage* (Durham, NH: National Materials Development Center for French, 1983). Fifty years earlier, Camille Lessard-Bissonnette wrote *Canuck*.

¹⁹ Other noteworthy histories of Franco-Americans include Yves Roby, *Les Franco-Américains de la Nouvelle-Angleterre: Rêves et réalités* (Sillery, QC: Septentrion, 2000) and Gerard Brault's, *The French Canadian Heritage in New England* (Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 1986).

²⁰ Joseph-André Senécal, *The Franco-American Bibliographic File Project. Newspapers and Periodicals: A Preliminary Checklist* (Burlington, VT: CREFANE, 1995).

²¹ See for instance Kirby Jambon's *L'École Gombo* (Shreveport, LA: Les Cahiers du Tintamarre, 2006).

²² Revon Reed, *Lâche pas la patate: Portrait des Acadiens de la Louisiane* (Montreal: Éditions Parti Pris, 1976). Jean Arceneaux et al., *Cris sur le bayou: Naissance d'une poésie acadienne en Louisiane* (Montreal: Les Éditions Intermède, Inc., 1980).

²³ Le Bris and Rouaud, *Pour une littérature-monde*, 61.

²⁴ Ibid., 24.

²⁵ Senécal, *The Franco-American Bibliographic File Project*.

²⁶ Honoré Beauregard, *Jeanne la fileuse* (Bedford, NH: National Materials Development Center for French, 1980). Originally published in 1878.

²⁷ Weil, *Les Franco-Américains*, 32.

²⁸ Ibid., 26.

²⁹ Camille Lessard-Bissonnette, *Canuck* (Bedford, NH: National Materials Development Center for French, 1980).

³⁰ Ibid., 40.

³¹ Antonine Maillet, *Pélagie-la-charette* (Montreal: Leméac, 1979).

³² Ibid., 108.

³³ Ibid., 312.

³⁴ Louis Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine* (Montreal: J.-A. Lefebvre, 1916), 193.

³⁵ Ibid., 189.

³⁶ Félix-Antoine Savard, *Menaud, maître-draveur* (Quebec, QC: Librairie Garneau, 1937).

³⁷ Ibid., 40, 77.

³⁸ See for instance Gérard Bouchard, *Genèse des nations et cultures du Nouveau Monde* (Montreal: Boréal, 2000).

³⁹ Ringuet, *Trente Arpents* (Paris: Flammarion, 1938).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 202.

⁴¹ Bill Marshall, *The French Atlantic: Travels in Culture and History* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2009).

⁴² See article by Gabriel Anctil, “Sur le chemin,” *Le Devoir*, 4 September 2008.

⁴³ Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Viking Press, 1957).

⁴⁴ Weil, *Les Franco-Américains*, 26.

⁴⁵ Gabriel Anctil makes this point clear in his article.

⁴⁶ David Plante, *American Ghosts* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 247.

⁴⁷ Jack Kerouac, *Doctor Sax* (New York: Grove Press, 1959).

⁴⁸ A review of *The Town and the City* written by Yvonne Le Maitre appeared in Worcester's French language weekly, *Le Travailleur*, 23 March 1950. Kerouac, *The Town and the City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950).

⁴⁹ Louise S. Appell, *Forgive me Father for I have Sinned* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2005) and *Thy Will be Done* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2006).

⁵⁰ Jacques Ducharme, *The Delusson Family: A Novel* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1939).

⁵¹ Jacques Ducharme, *The Shadows from the Trees: The Story of French Canadians in New England* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943).

⁵² Ibid., 18.

⁵³ Jacques Ducharme, "Profession de foi," *La Justice*, 6 June 1940.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ For some, the only visible, noteworthy, and highly ambiguous reference to "Franco-American" was found on the label of "Spaghettios" cans. "Franco-American original Spaghettios" read the label of this Campbell's product.

⁵⁶ Rhea Côté Robbins is founder of the Franco-American Women's Institute (www.fawi.net), which uses social networking sites to communicate.

⁵⁷ Côté Robbins, *Wednesday's Child* (Brewer, ME: Rheta Press, 1997).

⁵⁸ Ibid., 62.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 81.

⁶⁰ See *New York Times* cover article by Pam Belluck, "Long-Scorned in Maine, French has Renaissance," 4 June 2006.

⁶¹ Plante, *American Ghosts*, 5.

⁶² Ibid., 7.

⁶³ Ibid., 86.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 59–60.

⁶⁵ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952).

⁶⁶ Pierre Vallières, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (Montreal: Éditions Parti Pris, 1968).

⁶⁷ Plante, *American Ghosts*, 194. He also mentions the Native American ancestral connection so common to the hybrid French experience in North America.

⁶⁸ Fran Pelletier, *Little Pine to King Spruce: A Franco-American Childhood* (Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House Publishers, 2003).

⁶⁹ Ibid., 175.

⁷⁰ Gérard Robichaud, *Papa Martel* (Orono, ME: University of Maine Press, 2003). Originally published in 1961.

⁷¹ Bill Schubart, *The Lamoille Stories: Uncle Benoit's Wake and Other Tales from Vermont* (White River Junction, VT: White River Press, 2008).

⁷² Beaugregard, *Jeanne la fileuse*, 120.

⁷³ Ducharme, *Shadows from the Trees*, 11.

⁷⁴ Julien Oliver and Michael Parent, *Of Kings and Fools: Stories of the French Tradition in North America* (Little Rock, AR: August House, Inc., 1996).

⁷⁵ See Joseph-Yvon Thériault, *Critique de l'américanité: Mémoire et démocratie au Québec* (Montréal: Éditions Québec Amérique, 2002).

⁷⁶ William Cloonan, "Littérature-Monde and the Novel in 2007," *The French Review* 82, 1 (October 2008): 33–50.
