

ÉTAT PRÉSENT
WORLD LITERATURE IN FRENCH, *LITTÉRATURE-MONDE*,
AND THE TRANSLINGUAL TURN

JACQUELINE DUTTON
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

World literature in French is not a new phenomenon. It has existed in practice since the *Chanson de Roland* and in theory since Goethe's *Weltliteratur* at least.¹ Over the last decade, however, more scholarly criticism has appeared on world literature in French than ever before. In recent times, it has become increasingly linked with translanguaging, focusing on the choice of language for literary expression and its interplay with other linguistic, cultural, and stylistic influences. There are several reasons for this new wave of critical interest in world literature in French, including the publication of the manifesto 'Pour une littérature-monde en français' in *Le Monde des livres* on 16 March 2007, initiated by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud, and with forty-four illustrious signatories.² The trajectory from world literature in French to *littérature-monde* to the translanguaging turn in current research unfolds across a field that is shared by postcolonial, francophone, transnational, and transcultural studies. Exploring the intersections and interferences in this field is fundamental to understanding how these different areas promote re-assessment and reconfiguration of world literature in French, and the subsequent turn towards the translanguaging. The struggle to move from unity to diversity is a dilemma that plays out for every concept within the field, determining to a large degree the applicability and longevity of each concept as constructive complements to French studies.

Antecedents

The slow yet definitive move away from an exclusive focus on the Hexagon to encompass francophone studies more explicitly represents a paradigm shift familiar to all those working in the area of French studies. It is a shift that effectively debunks a 'unity' in French that has never really existed, and embraces a 'diversity' that is perceived in the term 'francophone', despite the continued impact of its association with colonialism. Much work has already been accomplished on this subject: by Charles Forsdick and Jane Hiddleston in their contributions to the *French Studies* 'États présents' series, and by Alec G. Hargreaves, Françoise Lionnet

¹ See Theo D'haen, César Domínguez, and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, 'Reading Paths', in *World Literature: A Reader*, ed. by Theo D'haen, César Domínguez, and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. xiii–xxi (p. xiii).

² 'Pour une littérature-monde en français', *Le Monde des livres*, 16 March 2007, p. 2: <<http://www.etonnants-voyageurs.com/spip.php?article1574>> [accessed 14 March 2016].

and Dominic Thomas, Christie McDonald and Susan Rubin Suleiman, as well as many other francophone postcolonial studies specialists.³ Rather than re-iterating the contents of these valuable surveys and studies, it is more useful here to draw out the ways in which their research on postcolonial, francophone, transnational, and transcultural studies contributes to driving world literature in French towards the language-focused paradigm of translanguaging.

Mapping out this significant and complex series of exchanges requires some interface with the development of literary studies in English, beginning with the advent of postcolonial studies as a discipline in the 1980s and 1990s. North American universities led the way in encouraging individual researchers in postcolonial studies from all over the world to develop and debate theories and processes for challenging dominant (Western) ways of thinking. Australia, New Zealand, and India, together with the United Kingdom, Africa, and the Middle East have all produced significant contributors to postcolonial theories.⁴ The evolution of this new discipline in the French studies sphere was inextricably linked to 'Francophonie', despite the imperialist overtones and paternalistic policies that accompany this moniker, and in the face of overt denigration of its approximation in English, 'Commonwealth'.

The pathway from Commonwealth to postcolonial literature was traced by John McLeod, who underlined one of the fundamental differences in criticism aligned with these concepts: while studies of Commonwealth literature tended to underscore the similarities in abstract qualities — deemed universal — of the work, postcolonial critics privileged the historical, geographical, and cultural specifics of the writing and reading of a text — the difference in preoccupations and contexts.⁵ Linguistic challenges were already being examined, even in the first issue of the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* with its initial statement that all writing

takes its place within the body of English literature, and becomes subject to the criteria of excellence by which literary works in English are judged, but the pressures that act upon a Canadian writing in English differ significantly from those operating upon an Indian using a language not his mother tongue.⁶

Meanwhile, postcolonial writers such as Salman Rushdie were interrogating the linguistic criteria of Commonwealth literature: 'it is also uncertain whether citizens of Commonwealth countries writing in languages other than English — Hindi, for example — or who switch out of English, like Ngugi, are permitted into the club or asked to keep out'.⁷ But as Edward O. Ako pointed out, questions regarding the

³ Charles Forsdick, 'Between "French" and "Francophone": French Studies and the Postcolonial Turn', *French Studies*, 59 (2005), 523–30; Jane Hiddleston, 'Francophone North African Literature', *French Studies*, 70 (2015), 82–92; Alec G. Hargreaves, *Voices from the North African Immigrant Community in France: Immigration and Identity in Beur Fiction* (Oxford: Berg, 1991); *Francophone Studies: New Landscapes*, ed. by Françoise Lionnet and Dominic Thomas (special issue of *Modern Language Notes*, 118 (2003)); *French Global: A New Approach to Literary History*, ed. by Christie McDonald and Susan Rubin Suleiman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

⁴ The landmark publication in this field was Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989; 2nd edn, 2002).

⁵ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 15.

⁶ Arthur Ravenscroft, 'Editorial', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 1 (1965), v–vii (p. v).

⁷ Salman Rushdie, 'Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist', in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981–1991* (London: Granta, 1991), pp. 63–70 (p. 63).

linguistic hybridity of a text were underdeveloped, whereas the inclusion of literatures in the indigenous languages of the Commonwealth countries was posited.⁸

The *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* now embraces postcolonial studies in its description, and by the 1990s ‘Commonwealth’ was considered more of a heritage or institutional term than one with cultural or intellectual currency.⁹ Francophonie, on the other hand, remains in frequent usage, but has been losing ground since the turn of the millennium. The gap between English- and French-language literary studies is demonstrated by the replacement of ‘Commonwealth’ by ‘postcolonial’ in the academy by the mid 1990s, whereas francophone studies had only just begun to make institutional inroads. Again, the United States were in advance, with Louisiana State University’s Center for Francophone Studies, launched in 1983; this was followed in the United Kingdom by Alec Hargreaves’s appointment to the Chair of French and Francophone Studies at Loughborough University in 1992. A special two-volume issue of *Yale French Studies* (82–83) in 1993, edited by Françoise Lionnet and Ronnie Scharfman and entitled *Post/Colonial Conditions: Exiles, Migrations, and Nomadisms*, was particularly forward-looking, with its emphasis on postcolonial rather than francophone epithets. A fascinating but perhaps less well known resource is *Mots pluriels*, a bilingual French–English online journal, which published many articles and reviews on postcolonialism and francophone themes from 1996 to 2003; although, of the 500 or so titles, only eight contained the word ‘postcolonial’ and eight others the word ‘francophone’: plurality and diversity were the keywords.¹⁰ ‘Francophone’ triumphed over ‘postcolonial’ again in 2001 when UCLA’s Department of French was renamed the Department of French and Francophone Studies, while Florida State University established its Winthrop-King Institute for French and Francophone Studies; and then again in 2004 with the change in title of the journal *Sites: The Journal of Twentieth-Century/Contemporary French Studies*, founded in 1997, to *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies/Sites*.¹¹ ‘Francophone’ made sense at the time, but then a conference on the subject of ‘French and Francophone: The Challenge of Expanding Horizons’ at Yale University in 1999, with papers published in *Yale French Studies* in 2003, edited by Farid Laroussi and Christopher L. Miller, heralded a re-interrogation of the term, Réda Bensmaïa famously crossing out ‘Francophonie’ in the title and body of his article.¹²

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, many scholars in French studies were rejoicing in the opening up of their departments to francophone studies, while others were questioning the ideological underpinnings of this new development.

⁸ Edward O. Ako, ‘From Commonwealth to Postcolonial Literature’, *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 6 (2004), 4 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1227>>.

⁹ For a critique of Commonwealth terminology, see Helen Tiffin, ‘Commonwealth Literature: Comparison and Judgement’, in *The History and Historiography of Commonwealth Literature*, ed. by Dieter Riemenschneider (Tübingen: Narr, 1983), pp. 19–35.

¹⁰ *Mots pluriels*, <<http://motspluriels.arts.uwa.edu.au>> [accessed 14 March 2016].

¹¹ For a more complete history of the introduction of ‘francophone’ studies in the academy, see Alec G. Hargreaves, ‘The Transculturation of French Studies: Past, Present, and Future’, *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 3 (2012), 2–8 (p. 2).

¹² Réda Bensmaïa and Alyson Waters, ‘Francophonie’, *Yale French Studies*, 103 (2003), 17–23.

Concurrently, postcolonial studies were also under revision in the anglophone academy, challenged by new theories of cosmopolitanism(s), and transnational and transcultural studies. At the same time, francophone postcolonial studies started to find their own theoretical space in the United Kingdom, and were defined by Forsdick and David Murphy as ‘a field of enquiry in its own right reflect[ing] a constructively critical strategy emerging from dissatisfaction with both the monolingual emphases of postcolonial criticism [...] and the monocultural, essentially metropolitan biases of French studies’.¹³ However, as Chris Bongie pointed out in his contribution to their 2003 edited volume, anchoring the future of French studies to two concepts that were both being ideologically challenged was perhaps too little, too late.¹⁴ Instead of a clear route leading from francophone to postcolonial, as seen with the Commonwealth to postcolonial consensus, there has been a messier merging of the two streams, neither of which has been particularly well integrated in France.¹⁵

In 2005, Forsdick pushed the issue further when he suggested that ‘the development of a francophone postcolonial studies may permit the elaboration of a genuinely postcolonial French studies’.¹⁶ Citing Hargreaves and McKinney’s *Post-colonial Cultures in France*, Forsdick emphasized the intellectual merits of reconsidering France itself in a postcolonial frame.¹⁷ This move was followed in 2006 by Dominic Thomas’s provocatively titled *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration and Transnationalism*.¹⁸ The year 2006 was also when, to echo Chinua Achebe, things fell apart. The centre lost its dominance over the periphery when five of France’s most prestigious literary prizes were awarded to writers born outside France. The Goncourt and the Grand Prix du roman de l’Académie française went to Jonathan Littel for *Les Bienveillantes*, the Renaudot to Alain Mabanckou for *Mémoires de porc-épic*, the Femina to Nancy Huston for *Lignes de faille*, and the Goncourt des lycéens to Léonora Miano for *Contours du jour qui vient*. French literary press reactions ranged from dismay to disillusion at the quality of literature coming from the Hexagon. It was this particular wave of recognition for the *écrivains d’outre-France* that inspired the publication of the manifesto ‘Pour une

¹³ Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, ‘Introduction’ to *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction*, ed. by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (London: Arnold, 2003), pp. 1–14 (p. 6).

¹⁴ Chris Bongie, ‘Belated Liaisons: Writing between the Margins of Literary and Cultural Studies’, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 1 (2003), 11–24 (p. 22). Forsdick re-assesses the current situation in ‘Beyond Francophone Postcolonial Studies: Exploring the Ends of Comparison’, *Modern Languages Open* <<http://www.modernlanguage.sopen.org/index.php/mlo/article/view/56/66>> [accessed 14 March 2016].

¹⁵ Jean-Marc Moura is one of the few academics in French universities who embraces the postcolonial, notably in *Littératures francophones et théorie postcoloniale* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1999; 2nd edn, 2013). Perhaps predictably, Commonwealth studies have remained strongest in non-English-language countries, such as France; see Jacqueline Bardolph, ‘Looking in from “Beyond”: Commonwealth Studies in French Universities’, in *Postcolonizing the Commonwealth: Studies in Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rowland Smith (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2006), pp. 39–50.

¹⁶ Forsdick, ‘Between “French” and “Francophone”’, p. 528.

¹⁷ See *Post-colonial Cultures in France*, ed. by Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney (London: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁸ Dominic Thomas, *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration and Transnationalism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).

littérature-monde en français' the following March and a book of essays on the topic in May.

World literature: becoming transnational and transcultural

Before attempting to analyse the catalyst at the centre of the world literature in French debate, it is important to introduce world literature to the field of intersecting disciplines, as well as rising transnational and transcultural trends in literary studies. From the mid 1990s, world literature became 'a disciplinary rallying point of literary criticism and the academic humanities'.¹⁹ The charge was led, controversially, by Pascale Casanova and Franco Moretti, who both proposed a more conservative, Eurocentric reading of patterns, Bourdieusian and otherwise, in world literature.²⁰ In contrast, David Damrosch offered a more inclusive definition of world literature as a mode of circulation and of reading, thus increasing the range and scope of languages and texts to consider under this rubric.²¹ And an edited collection by Christopher Prendergast truly opened up the question to commentary from several invested contributors including Benedict Anderson and Emily Apter, situating it in relation to the new challenges of postcolonialism and globalization.²² The launch of the Institute of World Literature at Harvard University with Damrosch at the helm in 2009, and the publication of at least a dozen theoretical readers, anthologies, and new approaches to world literature studies in the last decade, show the ongoing redefinition of a subject all but condemned as canonical *Weltliteratur* after postcolonialism had provided a new critical paradigm.

Resistance to and interrogation of this rise of world literature was clearly the aim of Apter's *Against World Literature*. Although her book title may suggest otherwise, she did 'endorse World Literature's deprovincialization of the canon and the way in which, at its best, it draws on translation to deliver surprising cognitive landscapes hailing inaccessible linguistic folds'.²³ However, like Simon During, she did not support tendencies toward cultural equivalence or substitutability; nor did she condone celebration of nationally and ethnically branded 'differences' or commercialized 'identities', insisting that assumptions of translatability rather than acceptance of incommensurability actually render world literature suspect.²⁴ In this way, her analysis justified the existence of the translingual text, as recognizing untranslatability from one text in German to another in Mandarin, for example, indicating by extension that *intratextual* untranslatability must also be acknowledged. If authors are challenged by the sayability or expressibility of their ideas in the chosen language of publication, a conscious or unconscious re-creation of and

¹⁹ Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013), p. 1.

²⁰ Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des lettres* (Paris: Seuil, 1999); Franco Moretti, 'Conjectures on World Literature', *New Left Review*, 1 (2000), 54–68.

²¹ David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 5.

²² *Debating World Literature*, ed. by Christopher Prendergast (London: Verso, 2004).

²³ Apter, *Against World Literature*, p. 18.

²⁴ For Simon During, see his *Exit Capitalism: Literary Culture, Theory and Post-Secular Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 57–58. Cited in Apter, *Against World Literature*, p. 18.

in language may take place, drawing on linguistic models that are unfamiliar or exotic in the principal language of writing. To surmount the obstacle, then, the author improvises and recasts the principal language of creation to produce translingual writing. Although Apter only used the term ‘translingual’ in passing, to refer to indigenous Pacific languages, her attention to the potential disconnect between language and creative expression determined by translatability was an example of how contemporary world literature studies informs understanding of translingualism.²⁵

Like Apter, Nicholas Harrison contested the relatively unmitigated promotion of world literature, on the grounds of what gets lost in translation. By interrogating Damrosch’s interpretation of world literature as ‘windows on the world’, Harrison underscored the attraction of the unfamiliar to the reader, inherent in foreign words and phrases, whether their alterity derives from geographical or temporal distance in relation to a starting point.²⁶ His arguments can be extended to elucidate the role of translingualism in world literature, for if world literature provides a window on the world, it may remain translucent rather than transparent if the translation cannot articulate the literary qualities, or poetics, of the work. On the other hand, recognition of the translingual in the text may be seen as opening that window, perhaps not as wide as mastery of another language might, but offering nevertheless access to new vocabulary, stylistics, and cultural references via the interpenetration of languages other than the one chosen for writing.

Just as the evolution from Commonwealth to postcolonial literatures, from French to francophone studies, effected an inherent shift from a perception of unity to an ideal of diversity, the debates in world literature have followed a similar course. From the unifying tendencies proposed by Casanova and Moretti in the millennial renaissance of world literature studies, largely influenced by the *Weltliteratur* of old, the move towards diversity is clear, driven by Damrosch and those who engage with a broader range of examples and issues in world literature.²⁷ However, with this advent of diversity, there has also been a multiplication of terminology to describe the exchanges between them, both in French and more widely, such as transnational and transcultural descriptors.

Lionnet had already predicted the ‘becoming-transnational’ of French studies in 2003.²⁸ Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih situated the transnational succinctly in 2005: ‘The transnational [. . .] can occur in national, local, or global spaces across different

²⁵ Apter, *Against World Literature*, p. 383.

²⁶ Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?*, p. 15; Nicholas Harrison, ‘World Literature: What Gets Lost in Translation’, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 49 (2014), 411–26 (p. 423).

²⁷ See, for example, Robert J. C. Young, ‘World Literature and Postcolonialism’, in *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, ed. by Theo D’haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 213–22; Stefan Helgesson, ‘Postcolonialism and World Literature’, *Interventions*, 16 (2015), 483–500; and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

²⁸ Françoise Lionnet, ‘Introduction’ to *Francophone Studies: New Landscapes*, ed. by Lionnet and Thomas (special issue of *Modern Language Notes*, 118 (2003)), 783–86 (p. 784).

and multiple spatialities and temporalities'.²⁹ Both the notion of the transnational, dating back to the early twentieth century, and the term 'transculturation', coined by ethnographer Fernando Ortiz in 1940, demonstrate an obvious recasting of references to hierarchically defined national or cultural boundaries in favour of permeable spaces of exchange.³⁰ Mary Louise Pratt used the word 'to avoid reproducing the dynamics of possession and innocence in travel writing', promoting a wider uptake of this concept, which expresses the reciprocity of exchange, notably between the centre and periphery.³¹ Transcultural studies, Hargreaves's preferred terminology for the future of French studies, is today understood as spanning

all forms of cultural contact, expressed in social as well as artistic forms, from the most harmonious and hybrid to the most conflictual and polarizing, be they national, sub-national or supra-national in scale, and with variations reflecting gender, class and other differences.³²

Both 'transnational' and 'transcultural' re-entered scholarly discourse in the era of globalization and have played a defining role in thinking through old and new terminology including world literature and translanguaging.

With the germane concepts and the major contributors in the field mapped out, it is possible to examine the contents and the aftermath of the *littérature-monde* debate in its evolving intellectual context. It is evident that this rich and varied background contributed to making *littérature-monde* a productive topic for academic exchange in global French studies. However, it also provides a schema of the direction that the French studies paradigm was taking before the publication of the *littérature-monde* manifesto. At that point, Francophonie was already under the interrogator's spotlight, the postcolonial was starting to look more post-postcolonial, and the path forward seemed to be leading inexorably to transnational or transcultural French studies. This is still a valid destination, but the world literature in French conferences and publications, which brought together writers and scholars working in these germane areas, opened up another new avenue for investigation. This path led towards the translanguaging (and translational), pushing the paradigm in a different direction from the one in which it was moving previously.

Littérature-monde

The 'Pour une littérature-monde en français' manifesto declared that a Copernican revolution had taken place — that the centre was no longer the centre — and referred to the sweep of literary prizes by writers born outside France the previous year: 'le centre, nous disent les prix d'automne, est désormais partout,

²⁹ Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, 'Introduction: Thinking through the Minor, Transnationally', *Minor Transnationalism*, ed. by Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 1–26 (p. 6).

³⁰ See Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995). First published as *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (Havana: Jesus Montero, 1940). First English translation by Harriet de Onis (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1947).

³¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

³² Hargreaves, 'The Transculturation of French Studies', pp. 7–8.

aux quatre coins du monde'.³³ Although a manifesto was perhaps unnecessary in the sense that the revolution had already begun, it did engender a more fundamental change in that it placed language at the centre of the francophone issue once more. At a time when Francophonie debates were in danger of being overtaken by culture, politics, economics, and history, the manifesto stated firmly that 'l'émergence d'une littérature-monde en langue française consciemment affirmée, ouverte sur le monde, transnationale, signe l'acte de décès de la francophonie. Personne ne parle le francophone, ni n'écrit en francophone. La francophonie est de la lumière d'étoile morte' (ibid.). The manifesto and its forty-four signatories thus converged around the idea that their association and solidarity came from the act of writing in French, rather than any rigid literary norms or shared national or cultural baggage. To clarify questions on the definition of *littérature-monde*, Le Bris answered enigmatically: 'On m'a souvent demandé de "définir" ce mot. C'est pourtant simple: deux mots, "littérature" et "monde", avec, entre les deux, un trait d'union. À inventer par chaque écrivain, puisque ce trait est l'espace même de l'œuvre'.³⁴

According to the manifesto, world literature in French is transnational and transcultural, but it is first and foremost *in French*. This might have pleased those who defend French against the hegemonic encroachment of English, but it was the declaration of the death of Francophonie that incited most reaction from the French, including the not-yet-elected President Nicolas Sarkozy, who began his article in *Le Figaro* with the affirmation, 'La francophonie n'est pas morte', and Abdou Diouf, Secretary General of the Organisation internationale de la francophonie, who declaimed against the 'fossoyeurs de la francophonie'.³⁵ British and North American media zoomed in on *littérature-monde* momentarily, focusing more on the French reaction to it, but the media buzz had subsided by the time that the follow-up book of essays was published in May 2007.³⁶

Almost all the twenty-seven essays in the *Pour une littérature-monde* collection refer explicitly to the writer's relationships with the French language, despite the fact that 'en français' was no longer part of the title. Abdourahman A. Waberi opened up the question of choice of language, and the fact that the French are much more obsessed with it than the writers themselves: 'Plus d'un écrivain dit francophone est déjà parti, au moins une fois, rencontrer la presse française comme d'autres vont à l'abattoir, redoutant la question qui coupe net tout élan: "Pourquoi

³³ 'Pour une littérature-monde en français', <<http://www.etonnants-voyageurs.com/spip.php?article1574>> [accessed 14 March 2016].

³⁴ Michel Le Bris, 'Monde en crise, besoin de littérature', <<http://www.etonnants-voyageurs.com/spip.php?article3153>> [accessed 14 March 2016].

³⁵ Nicolas Sarkozy, 'Pour une francophonie vivante et populaire', *Le Figaro*, 22 March 2007, <http://www.etonnants-voyageurs.com/IMG/pdf_figaro_sarkosy.pdf> [accessed 14 March 2016]; Abdou Diouf, 'La Francophonie, une réalité oubliée', *Le Monde*, 19 March 2007, <http://www.etonnants-voyageurs.com/IMG/pdf_Le_Monde.fr__diouf.pdf> [accessed 14 March 2016].

³⁶ *Pour une littérature-monde*, ed. by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud (Paris: Gallimard, 2007). For an assessment in the anglophone world of the French reaction, see, for example, the articles by Alan Riding: 'What and Who Are "French Writers"?', *International Herald Tribune*, 28 March 2007, p. 2, and 'In Paris, Language Sparks Culture War', *New York Times*, 31 March 2007, p. B7.

écrivez-vous en français?'"³⁷ But any decision to use the French language was stripped of its ideological significance by Le Bris: 'tout romancier écrivant aujourd'hui dans une langue donnée le fait dans le bruissement autour de lui de toutes les langues du monde. Écrivain, il se trouve simplement que j'écris en français'.³⁸ Stylistics and storyline, experiences and expression are deemed at least as important as the language chosen, if not more so, rendering the writer more independent and the text more personal. Perceptions of French as a liberating language or a universal commentary lose their weight as writers decentre the debate from the particularity of Francophonie, re-orienting it towards general principles of language and writing.³⁹

The image of a language that the writer 'brise, réinvente continûment et rend vivante' downplays the tensions of the French/francophone binary to re-introduce the universalist model for reflection on one's relationship with language.⁴⁰ As Mabanckou stated: 'On n'écrit pas pour *sauver* une langue, mais justement pour en *créer* une'.⁴¹ Maryse Condé echoed the sentiment: 'j'écris en Maryse Condé'.⁴² In contrast, Ananda Devi and Boualem Sansal each developed metaphoric narratives to relate the evolution of French language: Devi transformed language into an impregnable tower, which, in an inversion of the Tower of Babel, would crumble and fall if not renewed by new poetic forms from other cultures.⁴³ Meanwhile Sansal anthropomorphized the French language and discovered 'she' is pregnant to a francophone father.⁴⁴ But none of the authors contributing to the volume actually analysed the precise ways in which they recreate the French language to transform it into a language of their own. Despite references to the individualization of the writer's experience of language, and their recognition of the hybridity that their diverse origins bring to the language, the overall message is one of unity through the universalizing potential of the French language in the context of world literature in French.

To discuss and debate the new manifesto and publication within an academic framework, scholars specializing in postcolonial, francophone, transnational, transcultural French studies began to converge around *littérature-monde* at themed conferences and symposia. The 'Étonnants voyageurs' website tracks the progress

³⁷ Abdourahman A. Waberi, 'Écrivains en position d'entraver', in *Pour une littérature-monde*, ed. by Le Bris and Rouaud, pp. 66–76 (p. 67).

³⁸ Michel Le Bris, 'Pour une littérature-monde en français', in *Pour une littérature-monde*, ed. by Le Bris and Rouaud, pp. 23–54 (p. 43).

³⁹ See also Jacqueline Dutton, 'Littérature-monde ou francophonie? From the Manifesto to the Great Debate', *Essays in French Literature and Culture*, 45 (2008), 43–68 (esp. pp. 46–49).

⁴⁰ Le Bris, 'Pour une littérature-monde en français', p. 46. See Jacqueline Dutton, 'Francophonie and Universality: The Ideological Challenges of *littérature-monde*', in *World Literature in Theory*, ed. by David Damrosch (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 279–92.

⁴¹ Alain Mabanckou, 'Le Chant de l'oiseau migrateur', in *Pour une littérature-monde*, ed. by Le Bris and Rouaud, pp. 55–66 (p. 60); original emphasis.

⁴² Maryse Condé, 'Liaison dangereuse', in *Pour une littérature-monde*, ed. by Le Bris and Rouaud, pp. 205–16 (p. 215).

⁴³ Ananda Devi, 'Afin qu'elle ne meure seule', in *Pour une littérature-monde*, ed. by Le Bris and Rouaud, pp. 143–50.

⁴⁴ Boualem Sansal, 'Où est passée ma frontière?', in *Pour une littérature-monde*, ed. by Le Bris and Rouaud, pp. 161–74 (pp. 172–74).

of *littérature-monde*'s impact on the academy, and expresses Le Bris's ambition to influence research and criticism as well as creative expression with the paradigm he presented to the world:

Le Manifeste continue donc de faire réagir le monde des lettres qui semble accueillir avec beaucoup d'intérêt cette autre vision de la littérature en français. Comme un vent nouveau et salutaire qui viendrait dégager l'horizon de la création et des études pour les années à venir.⁴⁵

He followed through by attempting to attend as many of the academic conferences as possible, with a core group of *littérature-monde* representatives: Rouaud, Anna Moï, Mabanckou, and Waberi. After zigzagging around conferences from Denmark to Algeria, all these writers were present at the first major international conference on *littérature-monde* organized by Hargreaves and William J. Cloonan at the Winthrop-King Institute for Contemporary French and Francophone Studies of Florida State University on 12–14 February 2009, provocatively titled: 'Littérature-monde: New Wave or New Hype?'. Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, signatory of the manifesto, drew further glory to *littérature-monde* when he won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2008, declaring in an interview with *L'Express* that 'grâce à cette littérature-monde [...] la langue française peut faire entendre son message', and the title of Boyd Tonkin's article in *The Independent* was retitled in *Le Courrier international*: 'JMG Le Clézio — Prix Nobel 2008. Éloge de la littérature-monde'.⁴⁶

At least a dozen French and francophone studies conferences and symposia have been dedicated to this theme and many are still programming panels on *littérature-monde*. The impact of the world literature in French manifesto on the discipline has been significant, with well over 300 articles, book chapters, special issues of journals, edited books, and monographs appearing since 2007 that refer to *littérature-monde* in their titles and keywords, and many, many more that include consideration of this phenomenon. The first three edited volumes on the subject laid the foundations for diversity in the debates: the *International Journal of Francophone Studies* presented a double special issue entitled 'Littérature-monde en français: The Literary Politics of Twenty-First-Century France', Hargreaves distributed the papers from the Florida conference, along with other contributions, between *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* and the first book in the new Francophone Postcolonial Studies series at Liverpool University Press, which condensed almost all the relevant keywords in a single title.⁴⁷ These texts contained over fifty articles ranging from political to linguistic approaches, focusing on single

⁴⁵ 'Le Manifeste agite le monde universitaire', <<http://www.etonnants-voyageurs.com/spip.php?article2353>> [accessed 14 March 2016]. See also Jacqueline Dutton, 'Francophonie and its Futures: Utopian, Digital, Plurivocal', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 48 (2011), 1–15.

⁴⁶ Boyd Tonkin, 'JMG Le Clézio — Prix Nobel 2008. Éloge de la littérature-monde', *Le Courrier international*, 16 October 2008, p. 65; see also 'Prix Nobel 2008: un hommage à la littérature monde', <<http://www.etonnants-voyageurs.com/spip.php?article3115>> [accessed 14 March 2016].

⁴⁷ 'Littérature-monde en français: The Literary Politics of Twenty-First-Century France' (= special issue of *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 12 (2009)); 'Littérature-monde: New Wave or New Hype?', ed. by Alec G. Hargreaves and William J. Cloonan (= special issue of *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 14 (2010)); *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and littérature-monde*, ed. by Alec G. Hargreaves, Charles Forsdick, and David Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010).

authors or general literary trends, extending or redefining the boundaries of *littérature-monde*, embracing or rejecting its positioning against Francophonie, postcolonialism, travel writing, migrant writing, universalism, and the French language. The overwhelming impression is one of dissatisfaction with the manifesto and the concept of *littérature-monde* as expressed by Le Bris and others; but the engagement with this new formulation of what Camille de Toledo called a ‘guerre rêvée’ between French and francophone literatures and authors has engendered innovative ways of rethinking and re-articulating the terminology and paradigms of diversity in French.⁴⁸

In parallel to these outcomes arose the notion of ‘French Global’, developed by Christie McDonald and Susan Rubin Suleiman in their edited collection, which included articles by several contributors to the *littérature-monde* volumes.⁴⁹ Their declared objective was to move beyond the binaries of national literatures and world literature by focusing on spaces, mobilities, and multiplicities expressed in literatures in French.

The translingual turn

The return to language as the binding force of the *littérature-monde* manifesto and book raised serious doubts among many critics. Kathryn Kleppinger observed that ‘the writers fail to adequately address the specificities of their individual relationships with the French language’, while Lionnet stated that the manifesto

fails to address the nature of language as the hybrid medium that brings this world into being [and] is silent on the quality of the linguistic innovations that have served to anchor literature in specific landscapes and transnational critical geographies.⁵⁰

Essentially, invoking the unity of the French language as a monolithic treasure of which all writers are invited to partake, betrays the *littérature-monde* project as stubbornly aligned with Francophonie rather than being its greatest detractor. Jean-Pierre Cavaillé emphasized in *Libération* the ridiculous substitution of one neo-colonial paradigm by another equally biased and binary:

Ce qui est insupportable, c’est que le monde, le vaste monde, une fois de plus n’est perçu, aperçu, que par le petit bout de la lorgnette de la seule langue française et depuis son centre en fait incontesté et incontestable.⁵¹

One of the few critics who went beyond critiquing the monolingual French barrier to diversity is Michelle Keown. In exploring translingualism in Pacific events such

⁴⁸ Camille de Toledo, *Visiter le Flurkistan, ou, Les illusions de la littérature monde* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2008).

⁴⁹ *French Global*, ed. by McDonald and Suleiman.

⁵⁰ Kathryn Kleppinger, ‘What’s Wrong with the *littérature-monde* Manifesto?’, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 14 (2010), 77–84 (p. 77); Françoise Lionnet, ‘Universalisms and Francophonie’, *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 12 (2009), 203–21 (p. 204).

⁵¹ Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, ‘Francophones, l’écriture est polyglotte’, *Libération*, 30 March 2007, <http://www.libération.fr/tribune/2007/03/30/francophones-l-écriture-est-polyglotte_88931> [accessed 14 March 2016].

as the Salon international du livre océanien, she underscored, quoting Samia Mehrez, the fact that ‘texts written by “postcolonial bilingual subjects” problematize the assumption [...] of a transaction between discrete, clearly defined source and target languages, instead creating a hybrid “in-between” language’.⁵² Although there is very little published research on translingualism in relation to the *littérature-monde* phenomenon, the emphasis on French language that emerges from creative texts, and the inadequate reflexivity on the part of the authors that is pointed out in scholarship, suggests that there is much more work to do in this area.

Translingual terminology is not new either — like transculturation it also began to appear in academic papers in the 1990s in relation to African literature, but remained an outlying theoretical concept until Stephen G. Kellman dedicated a book-length study to it in 2000.⁵³ Focusing on literary translingualism, he differentiated between *ambilinguals* as authors who have written important works in more than one language, and *monolingual translinguals*: those who have written in only a single language but one other than their native one.⁵⁴ Distilling his definitions in 2015, he described translingual literature as ‘texts by authors using more than one language or a language other than their primary one’.⁵⁵ This is a broad and inclusive category that requires further descriptive refinement, including the idea that the translingual text represents a kind of contact zone for languages, and by extension the cultures they carry within them — a hybrid third space where the exchanges and modifications between languages are negotiated by the author to produce a text that is more than simply the sum of its parts. Developing the definition in this way does not limit it, but in fact enriches it to include the various registers and orders of language as well as just ‘named’ languages. By recognizing and valorizing the multiplicity of historically and socially situated uses of language in the author’s writing, translingualism fundamentally challenges the monolingual paradigm and by extension the national or cultural hegemony it implies. This is exactly what Assia Djébar identifies in her own work: not just the Arabic and the French, but the oral and written, the formal and informal, her class, her gender, her age, as different languages that intervene and require accommodation in the text:

Peut-être même, pendant longtemps, me suis-je sentie portée le plus souvent par des voix non françaises — elles qui me hantent et qui se trouvaient être souvent voix ennemies de l’occupant — pour les ramener, elles, justement en les inscrivant et je devais, obscurément contrainte, en trouver l’équivalence, sans les déformer, mais sans hâtivement les traduire. . .

⁵² Michelle Keown, ‘*Littérature-monde ou littérature océanienne? Internationalism versus Regionalism in Francophone Pacific Writing*’, in *Transnational French Studies*, ed. by Hargreaves, Forsdick, and Murphy, pp. 240–57 (p. 253). See also Samia Mehrez, ‘Translation and the Postcolonial Experience: The Francophone North African Text’, in *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 120–38.

⁵³ Stephen G. Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). See also, by the same author, *Switching Languages: Translingual Writers Reflect on their Craft* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

⁵⁴ Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Stephen G. Kellman and Natasha Lvovich, ‘Literary Translingualism: Multilingual Identity and Creativity’, *L2 Journal*, 7 (2015), 3–5 (p. 3).

Oui, ramener les voix non francophones — les gutturales, les ensauvagées, les insoumises — jusqu'à un texte français qui devient enfin mien.⁵⁶

In-depth reflection of this nature by the contributing authors to the *Pour une littérature-monde* text would have enhanced potential for greater understanding of their translingual missions and practices.

There are few scholarly studies that explicitly link translingualism to world literature in French, but clear connections exist with postcolonial, francophone, transnational, and transcultural issues, as well as diasporic and world literature in general.⁵⁷ Kellman's studies and edited works offer a broad range of examples of translingual texts both by writers who have chosen a language other than their mother tongue as their language of literary expression — Samuel Beckett, Joseph Conrad, Vladimir Nabokov, Milan Kundera — and by postcolonial authors including Rushdie, Achebe, Edwige Danticat, and Condé. Kellman and Lvovich's substantial bibliography of translingual literature in English, including over 100 critical titles, demonstrates the surge in interest in this concept for literary analysis.⁵⁸ *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature*, by Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Julie Hansen, and Carmen Zamorano Llana, extends consideration of translingualism beyond the traditional postcolonial zone to include articles on Taiwanese poet Hsia Yü and German–Turkish interfaces. In their Introduction, the editors foreground

how translingual literature, by overcoming the limits of monolingualism, makes visible a realm located between and beyond languages and cultures', and they highlighted 'a shift in emphasis from the phenomenon of bilingualism to that of translingualism: i.e. from a binary model tracing an author's path from one discrete language to another, to a more dynamic model of the productive zone situated in between languages, where different linguistic media collide and intermingle.⁵⁹

Several other recent studies focus on the mercurial, adaptive, improvisational, and open nature of translingual writing, which is in keeping with the development of transnational and transcultural terminology. Some distinctions have nevertheless evolved within studies of translingualism that differentiate between writing practices of those who choose their language for literary expression and postcolonial writers for whom the choice is less voluntary. For example, in attempting to locate transnational/translingual narratives, Rita Wilson states:

Contrary to postcolonial writers whose narratives self-consciously engage with their own linguistic métissage and/or cultural hybridity by explicitly thematizing the power relationships between different linguistic strands, the narratives of transnational/translingual writers explore new identities by constructing new dialogic spaces in which language choice is located outside

⁵⁶ Assia Djebar, *Ces voix qui m'assiègent: en marge de ma francophonie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999), p. 29.

⁵⁷ A rare exception is Sara Kippur, *Writing It Twice: Self-Translation and the Making of a World Literature in French* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015).

⁵⁸ Steven G. Kellman and Natasha Lvovich, 'Selective Bibliography of Translingual Literature', *L2 Journal*, 7 (2015), 152–66.

⁵⁹ Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Julie Hansen, and Carmen Zamorano Llana, 'Introduction: Conceptualizing Transculturality in Literature', *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature*, ed. by Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Julie Hansen, and Carmen Zamorano Llana (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), pp. ix–xxvii (p. xxiii).

the oppositional model set up by the traditional binaries of postcolonial theorizing: centre/margin, self/other, colonizer/colonized.⁶⁰

While recognition of the specificity of the postcolonial situation and the politico-historical parameters that bind writers to particular languages is of primordial importance, there is merit in promoting a diversification of examples and experiences by understanding postcolonial texts as contributing to translanguaging, as Eric Sellin has done.⁶¹ Stefan Helgesson has also provided insights into the role that transcultural and translanguaging specificity and characteristics of Djébar's writing play in the translatability of her work, stating that her translanguaging texts, especially *La Disparition de la langue française*, which has been translated into German and Dutch, but not English, offer 'resistance to the continued translational expansion of her work'.⁶²

In *Translingual Identities*, Tamar Steinitz confirmed both the important heritage and the significant examples provided by postcolonialism to translanguaging studies:

Postcolonial studies have been instrumental in creating a critical language for the discussion of transnational literature. Indeed, some of the most notable instances of bilingualism and translanguaging occur in the postcolonial context, and the debates about the appropriation and transformation of the languages of the colonial power by its marginalized former subjects touch on fundamental questions regarding self and language.⁶³

As Forsdick has signalled in the only study to date that critically links the *littérature-monde* phenomenon to translanguaging, the participating authors and ensuing debates neglected the qualitative role that translanguaging writing played in projecting 'francophone' literature into the sphere of prizeworthy excellence:

Often lost in these debates, however, was the distinctiveness of translanguaging writing, and the fact that the 2006 prize laureates listed above were part of a clear pattern of cultural recognition evident around such literary production since the final two decades of the twentieth century.⁶⁴

Concluding his analysis of translanguaging in the work of André Makine, Vassilis Alexakis, and Dai Sijé — writers who are literary translanguagers by choice rather than by postcolonial imposition — Forsdick offered the promising suggestion that 'translanguaging writing in French would appear to allow us a glimpse of French as a language detached from its close ties to a single nation, of French literature as a body of texts whose transnational dimensions are fully apparent'.⁶⁵

Whether French studies embraces translanguaging as a conceptual framework, not just to examine creolization in African texts or stylistic devices adopted in

⁶⁰ Rita Wilson, 'Cultural Mediation through Translingual Narrative', *Target*, 23 (2011), 235–50 (p. 237). See also Charles Forsdick, 'French Literature as World Literature: Reading the Translingual Text', in *The Cambridge Companion to French Literature*, ed. by John D. Lyons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 204–21 (p. 212).

⁶¹ Eric Sellin, 'Translingual and Transcultural Patterns in Francophone Literature of the Maghreb', in *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature*, ed. by Nordin, Hansen, and Zamorano Lena, pp. 223–44.

⁶² Stefan Helgesson, 'Literary Language and the Translated Self of Assia Djébar', in *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature*, ed. by Nordin, Hansen, and Zamorano Lena, pp. 203–21 (p. 207).

⁶³ Tamar Steinitz, *Translingual Identities: Language and the Self in Stefan Heym and Jakov Lind* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013), p. 4.

⁶⁴ Forsdick, 'French Literature as World Literature', p. 211.

⁶⁵ Forsdick, 'French Literature as World Literature', p. 219.

post-Soviet writers in France, but to rethink the unity and diversity of the French language, remains to be seen. What is clear is that before the *littérature-monde* manifesto burst on to the literary scene, thrusting itself into academic discourse, contemporary understanding of world literature in French was evolving more calmly out of the various strands of postcolonial, francophone, transnational, transcultural, and world literature studies. The catalysing force of *littérature-monde*, in spite of its inherent lacunae, sparked a new disciplinary turn towards translingual studies. If, as the editors of *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature* suggest, '[t]ranslingual literature calls into question the transparency of language, reminding the reader of its contingency and instability',⁶⁶ then perhaps translingualism will turn out to be the essential means for re-articulating modern languages studies more widely.

⁶⁶ Irene Gilsean Nordin, Julie Hansen, and Carmen Zamorano Llena, 'Introduction: Conceptualizing Transculturality in Literature', in *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature*, ed. by Nordin, Hansen, and Zamorano Llena, pp. ix–xxvii (p. xxiii).