

H-France Salon
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CONVERSATION¹

Michael G. Vann

Reading over these stimulating contributions to our *H-France Salon* I was struck by the ways in which scholars who engage the history of race and racism in France still lag behind Americanists and world historians. I appreciate T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting's intervention as it directs our attention to American scholarship that can help us better theorize both French history and contemporary France. Our discussion centers on race as an ideological construct and cultural phenomenon, which is an important first step. But things stop there. Our discussion fails to understand race as an essential aspect of the history of global capitalism. Of course, we should heed Abdellali Hajjat's warning about the simplistic notion held by many French social scientists that race is merely "un concept qui masque la réalité du conflit de classe." Race works with class. Race is historically intertwined with class. We need to position race alongside class and gender as foundational to Western modernity. Recent work such as Nikhil Pal Singh's *Race and America's Long War* and Asad Haider's *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump* may serve as models for this project. Their discussions of race fit with Françoise Vergès' call to "dénationaliser le féminisme, de le désoccidentaliser, de combattre le capitalisme racial et ses politiques racistes."

World historians will tell us that race and racism arose from the historically specific economic structures of the Atlantic world. Philip Curtin's classic lectures on the "plantation complex" detailed the ways in which the Caribbean system was a new form of slavery. In contrast to the examples of expanding states enslaving captives seized on the battlefield or in conquered territory, Europeans transported sub-Saharan Africans thousands of miles to islands and later to a continent depopulated by epidemic disease and acts of genocide. Unlike the slavery of the classical world, ethnic categories of white, black, or Indian became markers of freedom, servitude, or marginalization. Colonial New World slavery created race as a method of organizing and maintaining this historically specific form of economic production, which in turn gave rise to industrialization. Slave labor produced the capital for early technological experiments; the sugar that came to make up an important source of calories for the new European factory workers; and the cotton for these factories to spin into thread and weave cloth. With systems of labor and supply chain management developed on Caribbean plantations and brought to new factories from Manchester to Mulhouse, slavery was essential to the rise of Western industrial capitalism. While authors ranging from Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* to Sven Beckert in his magisterial *Empire of Cotton* have laid out these linkages and their legacies for Britain and the United States, such a connection that ties the ideology of racism to the material world of economic exploitation has not

¹ This conversation was conducted in a shared online document between July and November 2018.

shaped our discussion nor has it been foundational in the field of French history. I find it frustrating that France's role in this history tends to focus on the revolution in Saint-Domingue and the birth of Haiti and loses sight of centuries of French slave trading and the French plantation economy. As anglophone scholarship dominates world history, British and American examples illustrate the connections between slavery and Western industrial capitalism and overshadow France's contributions to the creation of race and the use of racism in the Atlantic world. As Alyssa Sepinwall and I argued in a 2010 special issue of *The World History Association Bulletin*, we can fix this problem by inserting France into world history and by placing our narrative of French history into a world historical context.

Nor should the history of race and racism be distinct from the development of French political systems. We should also consider how France's lingering slave system shaped French notions of freedom during its nineteenth-century experiments with republicanism. Tyler Stovall, in his American Historical Association Presidential Address in January 2018 "White Freedom and the Lady of Liberty," used the figure of the Statue of Liberty to interrogate French and American conceptualizations of freedom. He argued that they were gendered male and raced white. While Stovall's book on the subject is forthcoming, two recent award-winning studies, Lorelle Semley's *To Be Free and French: Citizenship in France's Atlantic Empire* and Sue Peabody's *Madeleine's Children: Family, Freedom, Secrets, and Lies in France's Indian Ocean Colonies*, show how slavery's legacies impacted the development not just of race but of freedom in the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean basins. All three authors demonstrate trans-national manifestations of the intersectionality of race, class, and gender in the greater francophone world. Clearly, French conceptions of freedom are rooted in global patterns of racism.

I applaud Dorian Bell's work in literature. His linking of France's republican empire to its history of anti-Semitism is insightful and provocative, especially when he invokes the "primordial French republican moment" when French revolutionaries debated allowing the entry of black and Jewish "Others." Bell made me think of several currents between the empire and the metropole central to France's history with race and of racism. First, in Indochina (my corner of the empire), reactionary, royalist, and otherwise disgruntled right-wing colonists imported anti-Semitism. While remaining part of France's larger discourse on the Jewish "Other," it was rearticulated in new ways in the tropics. Sources from Hanoi and Saigon demonstrate how, with few Jews around, anti-Dreyfusards vented their spleen on Chinese people. They were a reasonable facsimile and could serve as stand-ins. Popular Sinophobic sentiment often recycled familiar stereotypes from anti-Semitic paranoia; with some even claiming that Chinese merchants were "proud to be called the 'Jews of Asia.'" Anti-Semitism reared its ugly head in debates on whiteness, sexuality, and citizenship. When the colonial administration condemned impoverished Ashkenazi sex workers trafficked throughout the colonial world, they declared them to be not only a threat to both the physical health of white men but also a danger to racial boundaries. Since they were willing to serve Asian clients, they were poor and linked to organized crime, and their Eastern European origin cast doubt upon their claim to whiteness, the colonial state subjected them to stricter immigration policies and eventually moved to expel them before the First World War. From Dreyfus to Vichy, white colonial society in Southeast Asia was increasingly open to the race thinking of the far right. For example, the planter, politician, and newspaper publisher Henri de Monpezat cheered Mussolini and raged against the alleged weaknesses of the Third Republic, especially in regard to any conciliatory

policies towards the Vietnamese. When Admiral Jean Decoux took power in July 1940, he found a French community willing to embrace his version of Pétain's National Revolution, including the implementation of anti-Jewish and anti-Masonic laws. Elsewhere in the empire, the connection between colonial and anti-Semitic violence is illustrated by the now well-known career of Maurice Papon. In addition to rounding up Jews in Bordeaux and supervising anti-FLN massacres in Paris in 1961 and 1962, he served in the colonial military and police force in North Africa and the Levant. Papon showed a consistent willingness to use excessive state violence against Arabs and Jews. These intersections of colonial and metropolitan racism bring to mind the image of a cancer that has metastasized.

Finally, in contrast to these remarks on the macro-histories of capitalism and republicanism, I urge us to engage race and racism in the micro-history of the intimate. Tracey Rizzo's recent *Intimate Empires: Body, Race, and Gender in the Modern World* (co-authored with Steven Gerontakis) and her work as editor of a special double volume of the *Journal of World History* (December, 2017) and a special issue of *World History Connected* (October, 2018) have foregrounded intimate relations as crucial sites for the construction and maintenance, but also erosion and contestation of race and racism in the French and other colonial empires. Rizzo, but also Peabody and Semley, show us how individuals make history, often behind closed doors and hidden from the historian's gaze.

T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting

I'd like to draw attention to the work being done by the ACHAC group led by Pascal Blanchard. The work is not without its critics for a host of reasons, but it is impressive and nonetheless needed in the interdisciplinary fields of French and African Diaspora Studies. Drawing on history, science, literature and the work of a range of scholars, publications such as *Human Zoos* (2011), as well as the most recent sweeping, *Sexe et colonies* (2018), both necessarily incorporate sub-Saharan Africa and the latter most especially the early modern period. In that vein, Roger Little's series with L'Harmattan recuperates little-known texts that deal with race, gender, and sometimes both. For African Diaspora scholars, these works present new possibilities in research in the French context with reach into the anglophone world. The frustration is translation into the classroom for students fascinated by these subjects but limited by language and cultural fluency. This criticism necessarily falls at the feet of U.S. monolingualism and the continuing assault on language programs in the U.S. academy in favor of higher return on investment academic areas of concentration. Admittedly, I am now halfway down the rabbit hole of U.S. academic politics and feel like I'm donning my old Modern Language Association Executive Board Member hat; but as a scholar across these two dynamic fields/disciplines, one who swims in these currents, I think many of us inescapably sit here where we are also encouraged to make our work more public (not necessarily in the sense of public intellectualism, but more in the vein of Jeffrey Williams's critical piece on the "promotional intellectual") in order to secure some sort of equilibrium for our shrinking footprints in the university. In effect, for those in the US, we cannot talk about the evolution and limitations of our fields without some engagement with the landscape of the American university and the public pressures it faces.

Éric Fassin

Let me start with a remark. I have recently come to the conclusion that, at least in the French context, we should make it clear that, while racists talk about races in the plural (“la race blanche”, “la race noire”, etc.), social scientists, along with new generations of antiracist activists, especially among “racisé.e.s”, use race in the singular: “la race” without qualification (no color) – as a concept, not as an empirical reality, to analyze the logic of “racialisation”. Such a distinction might help dispel the false symmetry of self-proclaimed “universalistes” who conflate the two in order to paint both with the same brush.

Now, when using “race” as a concept, and “racisé.e.s” or “non-blanc.he.s” as a category, there is a risk of erasing differences among situations – thus making it difficult to account for tensions between groups. One example is the common distinction between anti-Semitism and racism. It is dangerous insofar as it often leads to an opposition (hence the misleading notion of a “new anti-Semitism,” pitting “racisé.e.s” against Jews). But if we want to avoid the slippery discussion about which one is worse (thus implying that the other is better), or the “concurrence des victimes,” we need to pay attention to the different nature of racism in both cases. The fact is that the notion of “racisme d’État” does not apply to the treatment of Jews in France in the present; but it would be absurd and counterproductive to conclude that anti-Semitism just belongs to the past.

Another example is that of the Roma. Postcolonial discussions of race often overlook the fact that the most openly, explicitly racist policies are those that target the Roma – European citizens treated as if they were not, and whose lives are made unlivable in order to discourage them from settling in France through a culturalist rhetoric of nomadism. We need to take into account such a differential treatment if we want to understand and combat racism among “racisé.e.s” – and how that contributes to the efficacy of “race”.

Two more remarks. The first has to do with the link between capitalism and race. While it is essential to think about this articulation, as Achille Mbembe does, for example, we should not assume that it all boils down to one logic – as if racism were a necessary byproduct of neoliberalism. I say this as a kind of self-criticism: in my work on anti-Tsiganism, I argued that the Roma were cast off as “worthless” in a neoliberal world of “value.” In the neoliberal biopolitics of race, their sole value is political: they can be treated as “rubbish.” More broadly, we can argue that “Fortress Europe” is also neoliberal Europe. However, I would also argue that there is nothing inevitable about this current correlation. After all, the first promoters of social-democratic neoliberalism, Tony Blair and José Luis Zapatero, resisted the xenophobic turn of immigration policies in Europe; and, more recently, Angela Merkel has tried to defend a neoliberal model opposed to the racist xenophobia of most governments in Europe (we could also think of Justin Trudeau in Canada). Thinking about race in an economic context does not imply a return to a totalizing theory; I would favor a more historical approach: different contexts mean different articulations.

Last point, which parallels the penultimate remark: intersectionality is fashionable in France these days. This did not start from race studies, but rather from gender studies – as feminist scholars realized that race could not be ignored in the context of the 2004 law on religious signs, and more generally when confronted with the French version of “politics of the veil.” But the fact that it is fashionable should not suggest that it is useless. Thinking about the plurality of logics of

domination (not only gender and race, but also class – and, potentially, more) is a crucial shift for the social sciences (as the resistance of many colleagues makes it clear, who invoke either class or color-blindness or both at the same time). What I find particularly useful is that it does not work one way only: sure, as the notions of “homonationalism” and “femonationalism” or “sexual nationalisms” make clear, gender and sexuality can be played against race; but as the mobilizations against “Mariage pour tous” also revealed, defenders of the sexual order can also be supporters of the racial order. All these are, in my view, historical lessons in complexity. Is this not what the social sciences are supposed to be about?

Madeleine Dobie

I’d like to pick up on a couple of through-lines from Round 1. My first set of thoughts relates to the *regards croisés* between France and the US that underpin our reflections. Most of us highlight differences in the status of race in France and the US – differences that traverse politics and society and that also play out in academic culture. But we also acknowledge common dynamics, not least the currents of ethno-nationalism, white supremacy, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism currently sweeping Europe and the US. France emerges from our commentaries as a nation that is still in some degree of denial about the impact of racism both in the past and today. The discourse of French republicanism is faulted for legitimizing exclusion rather than promoting equality, and mainstream French academia is described, especially by Éric Fassin and Abdellali Hajjat, as resistant to scholarship on race, a reticence that is interwoven with its predominantly white and middle-class demographic. The US seems to come off slightly better, but only by virtue of the implicit comparison made between the ways in which French and American university systems approach scholarship on race. I’d like to make a few quick observations about this picture.

Michael Vann observes that American scholars have been less critical of France and its history of racist and anti-immigrant sentiment than of, say, Germany. I think that this is less true today than it was in the past. The growth of interest in the history of colonialism and anti-Semitism and in ‘francophone’ and ‘postcolonial’ literature has brought many U.S.-based scholars to see France through a critical lens. What has perhaps been lacking is a fully comparative perspective that entails looking critically at the exclusionary effects of French republicanism while also considering why the contrasting American approach has also failed to diminish the effects of racism.

It is, of course, true that race is more widely accepted as a topic of research in the US and that affirmative action policies and, more recently, the promotion of diversity have at least flagged the low representation of Black and Hispanic Americans as students and faculty as a problem. But this attention to discrimination coexists with racism in both entrenched and new forms. Indeed, while academic discourses and campus activists are pursuing ever greater inclusivity with respect to race, gender and sexual identity, racist and anti-immigrant sentiments are being amplified in many other quarters. As Éric Fassin notes with respect to France, the so-called ‘national conversation’ on race is, in fact, fragmented into different publics. New voices are being heard, but there is also a reactionary backlash, among other dynamics. The point that I want to make here, however, is not that in spite of its more open academic culture the US is as racist if not more racist than France, but rather that the relationship of American academia to the wider economy of race and racism is complex. Éric makes a great point about the difference between the use of ‘race,’ by social scientists vs ‘races,’ in many other discourses. Where one underscores the conceptual status of

race, the other may seem to affirm the existence of different categories of people. I wonder here again about the parallels/contrasts between France and the US, where categories are (sometimes) used to support the diversification of voices, perspectives and, in academic life, areas of scholarship.

The second thread that I'd like to pick up on, which also pertains to *regards croisés*, concerns language and the future of American scholarship on France and francophone culture. As T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting observes, there have been incremental cuts to foreign language instruction budgets at both K-12 and university levels. The fact that smaller numbers of students are entering university with a strong training in French (or for that matter any foreign languages) is already affecting our teaching and publishing. The relatively new fields of francophone studies and colonial/postcolonial history are especially vulnerable since they are rich in texts that haven't been translated into English.

Are cuts to school and university foreign-language budgets, including the elimination of whole departments such as the French Department at SUNY-Albany in 2010, symptoms of insidious ethno-nationalism? The forces at work are, I would argue, more complex. One concerning trend is the characterization of foreign-language study as an elite pursuit that competes with other educational objectives and, in particular, with the effort to include more students from underrepresented groups. This argument, which comes up frequently in discussions of the priorities of K-12 education, was one of the reasons for Barnard College's decision, in 2016, to reduce a four-semester foreign-language requirement to two semesters. It is also woven into the current shift from 'study abroad,' now often branded as 'traditional' and elitist, to a model of 'global experience' that doesn't emphasize language training. Are minoritized students, some of whom are heritage speakers of Spanish, Kreyol and, yes, French, really advantaged by these changes? I would say no.

One take away here is that we should be vigilant about arguments that pit groups against each other but in the service of another agenda. We've seen several cases of this recently in the US. A lawsuit brought on behalf of a group of Asian-Americans who were not offered admission to Harvard has exposed the existence of potential quotas and neo-Orientalist mindsets among admissions officers, but it has unfortunately been framed as a contest between Asian-Americans and Black and Latino applicants who are presumed to benefit from diversity initiatives with no reference to the many ways in which white and especially wealthier white students are privileged in the U.S. educational system. Dorian Bell's discussion of the relationship between Islamophobia and anti-Semitism in France highlights a parallel case of minoritized groups being pitted against each other. What Éric observes about the lack of mutual recognition and in some cases hostility among groups including Jews, Muslims, people with African descent and Roma, also resonates with these U.S. dynamics.

Finally, I agree with Mike's observation that French colonial and postcolonial studies have often isolated the French empire from wider global processes, bracketing the close relationship between colonial racism and global capitalism. In my book *Trading Places*, I argued that it's important to avoid treating colonial systems as discourse machines and to examine texts in conjunction with the material dynamics of colonial production. I would perhaps push back a bit on the idea that early modern history of plantation slavery has been neglected in favor of the Haitian

Revolution. Books such as Chris Miller's *French Atlantic Triangle*, Doris Garraway's *Libertine Colony* and Sue Peabody's *There are no Slaves in France*, as well as my work, examine this early period. I think the turn to Haiti represented by landmark studies by Laurent Dubois, Carolyn Fick, John Garrigus, Deborah Jenson and Jeremy Popkin, among others, reflected a desire to recover traces of the perspectives, agency and voices of colonized and enslaved people.

To conclude, here are a couple of prescriptive 'positions':

I support T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting's call for more academic public voices from the humanities and social sciences – not only those garnering attention on the national level but in a range of forums with different degrees of visibility. It's important to make foreign language study a bigger focus of these academic politics and to identify it is a site in which diversity and equity – both nationally and globally – are being negotiated. Along these lines, I think we should oppose the erosion of study abroad by calling for increased funding directed to students whose financial aid packages don't currently allow them to study off campus. As per her suggestion, it is also important to make the valorization of translation something more than an academic piety. The growth of translation studies over the last two decades has made translation feel important and integrated it more fully into our historical and theoretical projects. But we need to offer more training for translators and to recognize translation as a legitimate scholarly contribution in the context of tenure and promotions decisions.

I'm writing this shortly after the announcement of the Guadeloupean writer Maryse Condé, author of inspired novels and memoirs that explore race, gender, colonial slavery and its afterlives, as the laureate of the "alternative Nobel prize" for literature. I'm not sure whether to just feel good about the popular, democratic and crowd-funded coup of the 'New Academy' against the sexist, cronyist and corrupt Nobel committee and to be pleased by the selection of Condé rather than the white European writers that it has predominantly preferred, or to wish that she had been awarded the Nobel 'proper': revolution vs recognition (Haruki Murakami withdrew his name from consideration for the alternative prize, perhaps in the hope of being rewarded after the committee has taken a year off to become less sexist.) After being named as a finalist for the upstart prize, Condé noted, as she often has before, that the reception of her work has been much more vigorous in other countries, including Sweden, than it has in France...

Françoise Vergès

I have never worked in a French institution of higher education because I have never been accepted in a French institution of teaching. Thus, I have had very few encounters with students on a continuous basis and I do not have to write syllabi or examinations. This may look like heaven but it also means that I have had no permanent position in France. If I know the work of people doing critical analysis of race, I have no clue about institutional obstacles or the content of academic internal debates. My higher education was done in the US, not by design but because an opportunity arose. All this to say that the academic debate on race has filtered through bits of conversation with friends. But I cannot speak for French scholars. In the institution where I worked until mid-September, I organized my own stuff, sometimes with very little funds, because I did not want to deal with the administration or with colleagues whom I knew would not agree with

what I was doing. I sought people I could work with or from whom I could learn. I work on race from a position of “scholarly activism.”

Race is for me the name for environmental destruction, for the fabrication of humans as waste, for politics of dispossession, humiliation, and erasure. Race begets madness, depression, and feelings of worthlessness. In a book collecting their testimonies, racialized women of popular neighborhoods near Paris give an analysis of racial capitalism from below: they know that their neighborhoods are being abandoned on purpose, and that, on purpose, they are disrespected. Humiliation is a word they use repeatedly to describe their daily encounters with public services, social workers or the police: “They do not treat us as humans.” This new literature of testimonies includes *Noire n’est pas mon métier* (2018) by a dozen black actresses who describe being systematically sent back to their blackness and hence to roles of sex worker, domestic or druggie, and *Décolonisons les arts!* (2018) where 13 artists describe their decolonial practice and their lack of creative freedom because they are racialized.

The question of structural racism in France (and I am not sure we all have the same space/time in mind) or what some call *racisme d’état*, is still caught either in the denial of its existence or in constant comparison to the US either as a worse or a better place for non-white peoples. It is a game of “who is the best white, who is the more humanitarian white.”

Dorian Bell

The number of threads emerging here, and the sheer knottiness of their entanglement, underscore what Madeleine Dobie so aptly points out: a nonlinearity currently scrambling the interpretive coordinates on which we’ve sometimes previously relied. Old narratives about immigrant integration into France map poorly indeed onto the fragmented realities of the so-called migrant crisis. Many of the economic migrants to Europe whose numbers spiked in 2015 were trying to pass *through* France on their way elsewhere, like the UK; not only were they often not from former French colonies, as previous generations of African and Asian immigrants to the Hexagon were, but they also didn’t always conceive of France as a final destination. This makes it easier for some to decouple the migrant present from the colonial past, absolving France of colonial responsibility for the northbound population influxes – real and imagined – currently reshaping the European landscape.

Against such conceptual and political challenges, the twenty-first century explosion in France of colonial studies offers no panacea. T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting is right, I think, to suspect that a significant but potentially only symbolic French reckoning with the colonial past could work to exonerate France of postcolonial culpability. But neither does the recent importation into France of anglophone postcolonial and critical race theories promise an easy righting of the analytic compass. These theories, of course, reject any compartmentalization of history; more than anything, they are ways of thinking about how the racial regimes of empire and chattel slavery still structure the present. In that respect they guard usefully against cordoning off the colonial past as an aberrant interlude in the march of liberal republican progress. Yet the most convincing portraits of racializing continuity between past and present were themselves hardly ever linear to begin with. As Emmanuelle Saada and others have elsewhere observed, any monolithic correspondence drawn between European colonial racisms honed in the periphery and postcolonial racisms

sustained in the metropole runs aground on all manner of complexities and nonlinearities (the co-constitution of race, class, and gender, for example, or of metropole and periphery). An extant nonlinearity, then, has merely ceded to a hyper-nonlinearity inaugurated when France's racialized migrant Others ceased even to have predictably French colonial origins.

This hyper-nonlinearity is compounded by transatlantic circuits of critique. It's de rigueur in France to note that critical approaches ascendant in the American and anglophone academies shouldn't be transposed willy-nilly into a French setting. Theories of settler colonialism and indigeneity developed to contend with original colonial sins in the United States and Australia take different points of departure than those postcolonial notions derived from overseas empires like France's. Critical race theory, designed as it initially was to think through the unique legacies of American slavery, jibes uneasily with the French metropolitan experience. And postcolonial critiques of liberal and institutional doxa – among them the grassroots movement to decolonize the French university system, importantly referenced here by Abdellali Hajjat and Éric Fassin – have provoked violent reactions from self-styled custodians of French republicanism trading barbs with activists over who the “real” racists are.

These various critical approaches inevitably strain against differences between French and American contexts (not to mention against each other). Still, the resulting tensions can bring novel disjunctions and parallels into productive relief. What's new and what's déjà vu about reaction today, to borrow a formulation from Fassin's initial contribution, and how can we tell? In answering such questions, heterogeneity in the tools of critique helps make sense of heterogeneities on the ground. Françoise Vergès' call to arms above is a case in point. By invoking the queer black feminism of the poet and civil rights activist Audre Lorde, Vergès isn't just introducing a French audience to the merits of American intersectional theory for understanding white feminism's reactionary turn in France. She's also deepening that theory with a postcolonial excavation of subjugated knowledges generated long ago by racialized women ensnared in historically, geographically, and culturally specific ways by the French slave trade. Such is precisely the value, to reprise Michael G. Vann's point, of recuperating the French instance (in all its kaleidoscopic variations, of course) from transatlantic or world histories currently dominated by anglophone accounts of slavery and resistance. And by extension, Vergès' and others' theoretically hybrid projects make possible a genealogy of the present against whose backdrop today's strange bedfellows – republican feminists and right-wing nationalists, for instance – are revealed as less historically foreign to each other than they might first appear.

Consider as well the strange bedfellows I alluded to in my original response: the current crop of French neo-Dreyfusards anchoring their defense of republican universalism in a renewed vigilance against anti-Semitism, and neo-Barrèsian defenders of French cultural particularity against supposed encroachment by the Global South. In theory, the two stake out opposite positions inherited from the Dreyfus Affair struggle between liberal universalism and counter-Enlightenment reaction. In practice, though, as I'm not the first to observe, both sides are joining in symbiotic resistance to the *bête noire* of an “Islamogauchiste” or “rouge-vert” alliance between the left and Islam. Ideological descendants of Barrèsian antisemitism, in other words, are making common cause with the *anti-anti-Semitic* standard-bearers of Dreyfus! Any careful genealogy of this curious present would of course account for the intervening (and intertwined) twentieth-

century histories of anticommunist and Islamophobic hysterias. And an even deeper genealogical dive reveals that French universalism itself was, from the very beginning, always constituted in complex and often problematic relation to the Jews (see Maurice Samuels, *The Right to Difference: French Universalism and the Jews* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016] and Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005]). If I ended my first response, then, with a gesture toward the primordial Revolutionary scene of liberal self-fashioning, it was not to trace some uncomplicated line from the eighteenth-century anti-Semitism of the nascent republican state to any *racisme d'État* directed today in France at its Jews. Rather, it was to remember how apparent discontinuities (like the blurring of old Dreyfus Affair lines) are inhabited and inflected by longer continuities in the tortured historical relationship between liberalism and racialized difference.

Not that something new isn't also happening. Recombinatory phenomena can weave novelty from multiple continuities, especially in moments of crisis. But do our theoretical and disciplinary formations sufficiently equip us to notice, and in real time to boot? Ongoing debates about race and class, invoked by several colleagues here as the conversation has progressed, certainly drive home the analytical intricacies required. Take current theorizations of racial capitalism, unified in their assumption of an intrinsic relationship between capital accumulation and racialization. Setting aside the reservation Fassin expresses about whether the relationship is necessarily abiding – a topic for a much longer conversation, no doubt – notions about racial capitalism offer various, even competing, insights into the resurgence of overt racisms in the Global North. Does Fortress Europe's relegation of racialized "supernumeraries" (external or internal) to the social and geographic margins of the capitalist world system hark back to an imperialist logic, whereby those not incorporable into the system were considered radically superfluous to it – and thus expendable, when not exterminable altogether? Or is such apparently radical superfluity illusory, merely the latest iteration of an old ideological trick by a capitalism interested to perpetuate a "dialectics of indispensability and expendability" (Achille Mbembe) that strategically devalues unskilled labor the better to incorporate it cheaply into the realm of value? And if this is the case, is neoliberalism thwarted, served, or thwarted *and* served by the politics of ethno-nationalism and populist xenophobia?

Venturing answers means combining accumulated lessons learned from the study and praxes of third-world internationalism, postcoloniality, racial capitalism, critical race theory, intersectional feminisms, indigeneity, and related contestatory traditions. It also means working comparatively across geographic, political, and historical contexts, something US-based students of France can do in fruitful tandem with francophone thinkers attuned to transatlantic circulations old and new. Apprehending the globalized reaction against real and perceived erosions of white economic status requires an emergent generation of scholar-activists as well-versed in the specificities of the French example as in the anglophone theoretical debates shaped by francophone tools borrowed from Fanon, Césaire, and others (and that generation exists; for a brief example, see Muriam Haleh Davis' impressive [recent assessment](#) of contemporary French reaction via a critique of racial capitalism). Historians, critics, social scientists of all stripes: the onus is on us, now more than ever, to make our intellectual comfort zones permeable to the dizzying changes afoot.

Contributor Bios

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Madeleine Dobie is Professor of French and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. Her teaching and research focus on colonial and postcolonial cultures, particularly the history of slavery and the contemporary Maghreb. She is the author of *Foreign Bodies. Gender, Language & Culture in French Orientalism* (Stanford, 2001, 2003), *Trading Places. Colonization and Slavery in 18th-Century French Culture* (2010) and, with Myriam Cottias, *Relire Mayotte Capécia. Une femme des Antilles dans l'espace colonial français* (Armand-Colin, 2012). She is currently co-editing a three-volume comparative literature of slavery and working on a book titled *After Violence. Culture and Politics in Contemporary Algeria* that explores the emergence of new cultural actors, forms and spaces in Algeria since the 1990s.

After 7 years teaching in the US (Brandeis University and New York University's Institute of French Studies), and 18 years at the École normale supérieure, in 2012, **Éric Fassin** became a professor of Sociology in the Political Science Department and the Gender Studies Department (which he co-chairs) at Paris-8 University, affiliated with the first CNRS center of research on gender and sexuality that he co-founded in 2015 (LEGS, CNRS/Paris 8/Paris Nanterre). He works on contemporary sexual and racial politics in France and the United States, and their intersections with immigration issues in Europe. A self-described *sociologue engagé*, he is frequently involved in French public debates on issues his work addresses.

Abdellali Hajjat is Associate Professor of Sociology and Political Science at the University of Paris-Ouest Nanterre. His recent publications include *Islamophobie. Comment les élites françaises fabriquent le "problème musulman"* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013, with Marwan Mohammed), *La Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2013) and *Les frontières de l'"identité nationale". L'injonction à l'assimilation en France métropolitaine et coloniale* (Paris: La Découverte, 2012). These works span his diverse research interests in the articulation of citizenship and race in French law, urban uprisings and political mobilizations by postcolonial immigrants in working-class neighborhoods in France since 1968, the complex social mechanisms that entail the racialization of Muslims in various social fields

(politics, mainstream media, human rights law, academia, companies, care sector, etc.), antiracist legislation and the French criminal justice system, and racism at large in the French academia.

T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting is the Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Distinguished Professor of Humanities (African American and Diaspora Studies and French) at Vanderbilt University where she is also Chair of the Department of African American and Diaspora Studies and Director of the Callie House Research Center for the Study of Global Black Cultures and Politics. She is author/editor of 14 books and 3 novels, of which the latest academic volume is *La Vénus hottentote: écrits, 1810 à 1814, suivi des textes inédits* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2018).

Michael G. Vann is a Professor of History at California State University, Sacramento. A past President of the French Colonial Historical Society, Vann specializes in the French colonial empire in Southeast Asia. Vann's recent publications include *The Great Hanoi Rat Hunt: Empire, Disease, and Modernity in French Colonial Vietnam*, *The "Colonial Good Life:" André Joyeux's Visions of French Indochina*, and *20th Century Voices: Selected Readings in World History* and over two dozen book chapters and articles in journals including *The Journal of World History*, *French Colonial History*, *Historical Reflections*, *The World History Association Bulletin*, *World History Connected*, and *Education About Asia* on topics as diverse as colonial film, postcards of executions, colonial haunted houses, urban planning, cholera, genocide, and cartoons about prostitution. He has taught at the University of California, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara University, the United States Naval Postgraduate School, Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia, Siem Reap, and East China Normal University in Shanghai.

Françoise Vergès (Ph.D. Berkeley, 1995) is an antiracist feminist now residing in France. She is the author of many books. Her latest, *Un féminisme décolonial*, was published in February 2019 with La Fabrique, and her most recent before that, *The Women's Womb: Capitalism, Race, Feminism*, is currently being translated by Duke University Press.

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Editor Bios

Emily Marker is an Assistant Professor of European and Global History at Rutgers University – Camden. She is currently working on her first monograph, which explores how public and private programs to promote solidarity between French and African youth collided with transnational efforts to make young people in Western Europe feel European after World War II. The project locates these competing generational projects in the entangled history of African decolonization and European integration. She has published in the *American Historical Review* and *French Politics, Culture & Society*. In 2015, she co-founded the Race and Pedagogy Working Group at the University of Chicago, where she was also a Fellow at the Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture and the Chicago Center for Teaching. She is currently a member of Rutgers' Center for African Studies, the Governing Council of the Western Society for French History, and the Chancellor's Committee for Institutional Equity and Diversity at Rutgers-Camden.

Christy Pichichero is Associate Professor of French and History at George Mason University. She earned an A.B. in Comparative Literature at Princeton University, a Bachelor's of Music in opera singing at the Eastman School of Music, and a Ph.D. in French Studies at Stanford University. She has held fellowships at the Stanford Humanities Center, King's College Cambridge University, the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, West Point Military Academy, and the Society of the Cincinnati. She is the author of *The Military Enlightenment: War and Culture in the French Empire from Louis XIV to Napoleon* (Cornell, 2017; finalist, Oscar Kenshur Book Prize) as well as articles and chapters that have appeared in *French Historical Studies*, *Modern Language Notes*, *Renaissance Drama*, and other venues. Her publications have focused on French neoclassical theater, the history of emotions, Critical Race Studies, and multiculturalism and her new projects include research on early modern art, war and humanism, Critical Mixed-Race Studies, intersectionality, and racialization in early modern Europe. Dr. Pichichero has more than twenty years' experience in diversity, equity, and inclusion work and she has spearheaded initiatives at Stanford, GMU, and in the profession. She serves on the Executive Committee of the Society for French Historical Studies, the Governing Council of the Western Society for French History, the Board of Directors of the Consortium on the Revolutionary Era, and the 2019 Presidential Advisory Committee of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

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