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Jean Beaman, *Citizen Outsider: Children of North African Immigrants in France*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017. xiv + 152 pp. Methodological appendix, notes, references, and index. \$34.95 U.S. (pb). 9780520294264; \$0.00 U.S. (eb). ISBN 9780520967441.

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“In the eyes of others, you see that you are not always considered French” (p. 66). Thus does one of Jean Beaman’s respondents reveal the paradox at the heart of republican ideology. Despite the state’s granting of formal, legal equality to all citizens, the daily interactions of *maghrébin*-origin individuals detailed throughout this book repudiate the idea that France is colorblind. *Citizen Outsider* provides the perspective of those who are “simultaneously members of a society yet kept on the margins of that society...not treated as full citizens because of their assigned otherness as racial and ethnic minorities” (p. 4). Beaman’s rich ethnographic data and careful discussion are a model of qualitative scholarship, centering the lived experiences of non-white French citizens to provide a clear picture of how racial discrimination functions in a society that claims not to recognize race.

One of Beaman’s strongest contributions is her focus on middle-class *maghrébin*-origin individuals: all her respondents attended university and hold professional positions. This methodological choice effectively controls for socioeconomic status and allows Beaman to confront the common argument that individuals of North African origin must overcome their class, not their race, to be fully accepted in French society. Each of her respondents, “despite doing everything right,” (p. 14) meets daily reminders that others do not see them as French. Beaman argues that they have been denied “cultural citizenship,” which she defines as “a claim to full societal belonging by fellow members of one’s community rather than a claim to a specific set of rights” (p. 23). Within this framework, otherness is often “assigned” to individuals of North African origin. Their lack of belonging is therefore not rooted in what they do or do not do, but rather in the way others perceive them no matter what they do. It is “in the eyes of others” that these citizens still feel like outsiders.

Chapters two and three explore the educational and professional experiences that opened doors for Beaman’s respondents even as they revealed spaces in which they would never truly be welcome. One respondent admits, “I realized when I was eight or nine or ten years old that we were different from other people” (p. 33). Schools play a crucial role in the creation and maintenance of republican citizenship; the education system, however, defines Frenchness in a way that excludes non-white children. Othering often comes from other children. Whatever the formal curriculum holds, respondents’ peers regularly remind them of their difference. Beaman

also examines the discrepancies between home and school for non-white children. In many—though not all—cases, family life that connects these children to their parents’ culture offers a more grounded sense of identity. Trips to North Africa prove particularly useful for affirming their *maghrébin* heritage, even while heightening feelings of difference or in-betweenness. Beaman pays special attention to the way her respondents experience higher education: not only is this the route that leads them to socioeconomic success, but it is also one that they travel with fewer and fewer people who look like them. Even as some of her respondents succeed within the *grandes écoles*, traditionally a direct path to the social elite, they continue to suffer the quotidian indignations of police stops, suspicious salesclerks, and literal gatekeeping by bouncers in nightclubs. Here again, Beaman’s work shows how acutely the French ideal of integration fails: those who excel at the purported steps to social acceptance encounter only further alienation.

This pattern continues into the respondents’ professional lives. Their North African origins can be an obstacle to finding or keeping employment—bearing out the findings of previous studies on names and addresses as markers for racial discrimination. Yet it is daily interactions with coworkers that reinforce their exclusion from “French” culture. Respondents are mocked or seen as suspect for following Muslim dietary practices or refraining from alcohol. More and more, they are called upon to condemn acts of terror or violence, creating an atmosphere of collective punishment—an assigned community identity at odds with the claims of republican individuality. Housing remains a domain of segregation, where landlords and local officials openly refuse non-white residents and many respondents choose to live in more diverse neighborhoods in the *banlieues*.

Chapter four considers the interplay of French and *maghrébin* identities that arises through these experiences and provides the core of Beaman’s argument. Her respondents place themselves on a continuum: 18 percent identify as exclusively French, an unspecified number claim a solely *maghrébin* identity, 44 percent adopt a combined or hyphenated identity, and 20 percent do not see themselves as French or *maghrébin*. It is striking that even those who feel fully French do not believe that others see them that way.[1] This again highlights Beaman’s key contribution to the debates over French integration: individuals of *maghrébin* origin do not control all the factors needed for acceptance into French society. In stark contrast to studies that blame “nonassimilation and noninclusion on the North African second generation,” Beaman’s work exposes the ways that “individuals who do everything right are still stigmatized and excluded” (p. 48). There is a sharp poignancy to the fact that fully two-thirds of her respondents invoke republican ideals as they define their relationship to Frenchness. This undercuts assertions that non-white French citizens need to more fully embrace French ideas or more openly assert their own sense of belonging. Beaman concludes that her respondents “do not reject republicanism as an ideology, rather they feel it does not apply to them” (p. 71). The readiness with which these non-white citizens marshal French ideology suggests that they are, in fact, some of the greatest guardians of republican values within a racialized society that denies them access to *liberté, égalité, fraternité*.

The fifth chapter poses the question of whether French citizens with North African origins can be connected to transnational Blackness. Beaman’s case for “a more expansive definition of blackness, one that encompasses individuals racialized as black or other and subject to oppression or marginalization” (p. 89) is the work’s most important theoretical contribution. She is careful to note that identifying with Blackness is not the same as identifying as Black. She cites her respondents’ invocations of solidarity with both Black Americans and Palestinians as evidence

for “shared experiences of otherness and exclusion from the nation-state” (p. 91). In this way, *maghrébin*-origin individuals’ Blackness is rooted in their exclusion from Frenchness. As they define their own identity and place, they “reference blackness in making sense of their social locations” (p. 89) and take part in “a transnational project allowing them to connect to the past and present realities of black populations worldwide” (p. 88). European Blackness is rooted in experiences of colonialism and migration (p. 89). This colonial history marks non-white French citizens as other, yet it can also be invoked as evidence of a deep connection to France. One respondent asserts that he has more claim to Frenchness than former President Nicolas Sarkozy, the child of a Hungarian immigrant: “there wasn’t a shared history between France and Hungary, right? But between France and Algeria, I mean, we used to be a French colony” (p. 72). Reading this alongside another respondent’s “somewhat joking” remark that “Obama is more my President than Sarkozy” (p.87), it is clear that these French citizens with North African origins connect themselves to imperial legacies, to transnational Black experiences, and to France itself.

Beaman’s conclusion opens with the series of attacks in France from 2015-2016 and the rise of Islamophobia in their aftermath. French analyses of this violence did not engage with legacies of racism or the experiences of marginalized communities, yet Beaman’s work asserts there can be no meaningful change without reckoning with these; France “ignores her minorities at her own peril” (p. 95). No matter how loudly France proclaims the virtues of its color blind republican ideology, “race and racism are central to their lives. And they take precedence over citizenship and socioeconomic origin” (p. 95). Yet, Beaman’s work shows that the North African second generation wants to belong; its members want to be viewed as French and to be recognized fully within the Republic. Far from their portrayal as apathetic or confrontational, non-white French citizens are finding ways to mobilize their citizenship and claim their rights and privileges.

Citizen Outsider brings a vital perspective to debates about race, belonging, and Frenchness. As should be clear by now, Beaman’s evidence is thorough and her central argument compelling. Her respondents unquestionably face systematic discrimination in their daily lives, no matter their socioeconomic status or their desire to be recognized as fully French. A welcome undercurrent is her reckoning with how to study—and even talk about—groups and individuals whose society refuses to name them. Without state-sanctioned identity categories, non-white French citizens (and scholars who wish to engage with them) must develop their own frameworks for discussing racial and ethnic difference and its effects. Beaman’s formulation of cultural citizenship and its set of “local everyday practices” (p. 24) is an effective way to disentangle lived experience from formal, legal status. In this way, republican citizens can still be French outsiders.

This book suggests a number of further avenues of inquiry. Any scholarship of “North Africans” in France begs the question of how Moroccan and Tunisian experiences differ from or are subsumed by Algerian ones. Beaman carefully notes the country to which each of her respondents connects. There is not, however, much consideration of how this affects their perspective as *maghrébin*. Algerians were granted full French citizenship in 1947 (and had the option to retain it after 1962). Members of the earlier Algerian second generation, moreover, found themselves subject to—and sometimes surprised by—their automatic acquisition of French citizenship before France’s double *jus soli* standard was amended in 1993 to avoid this.[2] How then might those of Algerian origin perceive their French citizenship differently? How do individuals of Moroccan or Tunisian origin think about the way Algerian histories tend to overtake their own? Certainly, the experience of the Algerian War of Independence marks Algerian culture and even family

traditions. Beaman notes that Moroccan and Tunisian respondents also invoke the violence and memory of the conflict. It would be fascinating to delve further into the specific ways that colonial violence can continue to shape identity and exclusion. One respondent offers a particularly rich description of how her Algerian family talks about the impacts the war had on their lives.

Another factor that Beaman dutifully notes is where in France respondents spent their childhoods. For the purposes of this book, it makes sense to consider how individual experiences converge in a national pattern. Belonging, though, can exist locally as well as nationally. One respondent insists, “I don’t care if people see me as French or not. As long as I am *marseillais*, I’m fine” (p. 63). If this can be read in part as a “coping method” in the face of cultural marginalization (p. 63), it can also be integrated meaningfully into the complex layers of the second generation’s identity.

There is also more work to be done on how race and Islam intersect. Early on, Beaman asserts that being North African is the source of her respondents’ exclusion, not being Muslim. This follows from earlier work on how respondents’ religiosity does not impede the way they saw themselves as French.[3] At the same time, she acknowledges that religion can be “code for racial and ethnic boundaries” (p. 22) and describes multiple ways that Islam is assigned to her respondents and provides the content for their exclusion from full cultural citizenship. It is possible, therefore, to accept that Islam is not a barrier to feeling French even while recognizing that being perceived as Muslim is one of the greatest obstacles to being perceived as French. Instead of asserting race over religion, it might be more fruitful to engage with the ways that Muslimness has been racialized in the French context.[4] Taking Islam more seriously as a racialized category could in fact provide additional support for Beaman’s argument that North Africans should be situated within transnational Blackness.

Finally, chapter five’s analysis of *maghrébin* origins within transnational Blackness opens an important discussion. There is space for more work on the specific uses of African American cultural and political referents within French contexts. Given one respondent’s specific invocation of “solidarity with those in Gaza” (p. 60), further attention might be paid to the way that Palestine figures in the worldviews of *maghrébin*-origin and Black communities.[5]

These questions highlight the book’s relevance and accessibility. The numerous connection points with African-American and other minority experiences make this book useful far beyond French studies. This a clear and engaging read that is eminently teachable at all levels. Beaman’s methodological appendix is an excellent reflection on identity and scholarship that should spark thought and discussion among undergraduate students and advanced researchers alike. The power of her respondents’ stories could reach many audiences, particularly given the way France and its racial minorities have entered our public discussions and newsfeeds of late. As much as the ethnographic work here respects particular contexts and individual experiences, *Citizen Outsider* offers a strong and important corrective to attempts to deny the salience of racial and ethnic identities in any society.

NOTES

[1] Non-white French citizens’ experience of others who do not see them as French has been well-documented by Patrick Simon. See, in particular, his *French National Identity and Integration: Who Belongs to the National Community?* (Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute, 2012).

Beaman accurately describes her book as the “ethnographic complement to this survey data” (p. 13).

[2] In the early 1980s, a number of children born in France to parents born in Algeria before 1962 (when it was still considered French soil) demanded the right to renounce their French citizenship. See Patrick Weil, *La France et ses étrangers. L’aventure d’une politique de l’immigration de 1938 à nos jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995). For more discussion of the changes to this statute made by the law of 1993, see Patrick Weil and Alexis Spire, “France,” in Rainer Bauböck, Eva Ersbøll, Kees Groenendijk, and Harald Waldrauch, eds., *Acquisition and Loss of Nationality, volume 2: Country Analyses: Policies and Trends in 15 European Countries* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), pp. 187-212.

[3] Jean Beaman, “As French as Anyone Else: Islam and the North African Second Generation in France,” *International Migration Review* 50/1 (2016): 41-69.

[4] On the development of a racialized Muslim identity, see Naomi Davidson, *Only Muslim: Embodying Islam in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012), particularly chapters one and six.

[5] The connection between Algerians and transnational Blackness would be particularly fruitful to explore given the historical embrace of Third World, and especially sub-Saharan liberation movements by the Algerian FLN. See Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2016).

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