

Through my interdisciplinary readings, research, and writing in Francophone cultural studies, I have been able to explore a wide range of cultural, socio-economic, and political issues from the perspective of revolutionaries to that of controversial activists. From its birth as a modern nation state, France has continuously redefined its meaning of citizenship and nationality. Understanding the history and cultural heritage of modern France means coming to terms with the place of minorities within the country; slaves, blacks, Jews, women and colonial subjects were amongst those who sought to understand their rights and identities and, in the process, helped to redefine France culturally, socially, legally, politically and economically. The fluidity of the gaze in regards to the “Other” leaves its position far from static; the stranger’s role, place, and representation can shift dramatically according to historical conditions.

Throughout my academic career, I have been actively involved in interdisciplinary scholarship in the humanities. In addition to my doctorate in French and Francophone World Studies from the Department of French and Italian at the University of Iowa, I have multiple degrees in Political Science, French, and International Business in which I often encountered the merging of politics, culture, and economics. While at the University of Iowa, I have engaged in a range of interdisciplinary research and activities. Actively pursuing course offerings in several departments, I have taken advantage of Crossing Borders seminars, an interdisciplinary cross-area graduate training program in the social sciences and humanities, and I have been encouraged to present my research in interdisciplinary research groups such as the European Studies Group and the Middle East and Muslim World Studies Group. Iowa City has been designated by UNESCO as a City of Literature and is home to the internationally renowned International Writing Program, through which I have met Francophone poets, authors, scholars, and journalists from around the world, including Leila Sebbar, whose work has been the subject of my research. These personal interactions have supported my scholarly agenda, while at the same time have enabled me to gain valuable teaching experience and insight into research methodology and practice in the context of a major research university.

Through research projects that were born from my readings, writings, and experiences, I have sought to analyze the evolution in the postcolonial regard towards minority populations over time. My dissertation, under the direction of Dr. Michel Laronde, is inspired from experience in the field living in multi-ethnic low-income housing in southern France and explores the intersections of ethnicity, age, and sexuality in identity formation in contemporary French society. During my residence in Marseille, I gained valuable experience in the various communities of “Other” citizens—immigrants, Pieds Noirs, Jews, Portuguese, Romas, and Corsicans. My direct, personal work with immigrants both in France and in the US has given me a global perspective and insight into the immigrant experience. In addition, close personal relationships that I have developed have enabled me to make significant networks with members of the French minority communities.

With these interests in mind, the questions of immigration and multiculturalism in France became my primary field of research. I designed the initial stage of my research to be rather broad in scope as to best determine the most relevant questions in the field today, beginning with projects concerning multi-ethnic refugees from the Algerian War of Independence, then shifting my concentration towards representations of migrant women in literature, the transmission of oral history in immigrant communities, religious practices among Algerian immigrants and their children, and finally towards the problematic terminology of “second generation immigrants.”

I. Popular Representations of Algerian Immigrants in France

My most immediate postdoctoral project will be to revise my dissertation for book publication, and currently, I am editing a series of articles inspired from the research. Entitled “Mon père, l'étranger : stéréotypes des immigrés algériens en France,” my dissertation research analyzes the representations of first generation North African immigrants by their children in Arabo-French immigration literature and cinema. The “Beur generation” paved the way for dialogue about and representation of post-World War II North African migrant labor through the opening of a polyphonic discourse concerning colonial and post-colonial history. Beur authors and cinematographers have broken the long standing collective pact of silence surrounding the first generation of North African immigrants, a silence which has led to an empty and imagined history of a generation that is spoken of, but who does not speak. In filling the void concerning North African parents, these works often result in filtered representation and history as they reproduce the very stereotypes about first generation immigrants that are so rampant in dominant French culture; the “reconstruction” of history and the representation of its actors that takes place through Beur cultural productions are thereby strongly influenced by dominant French institutions.

Although many scholars in French immigration studies have chosen to focus horizontally on differences between the diverse immigrant populations that have moved to France, my work is innovative in that I have chosen to examine inter-generational differences within a single immigrant population. Not only are there differences in places of origin that produce unique discourses, but there are also generational differences that have appeared with the passage of time and the institutionalization of immigration and immigration literatures. The Beur generation in France, inheritors of their Algerian immigrant parents' past, reconstruct and reinterpret their history with the filters of their own experiences and the subversive presence of French institutions. These histories have the capacity to be read as secondary sources, yet analysis reveals that they depict the immigrant generation as a masked generation. This introduction analyzes the processes of dissonances and “mismembering” and examines how the present influences the process of filtering on the transmission of the narrative. Research drawn from this project has been presented domestically and internationally at the *Conseil International d'Etudes Francophones*, the *Women in French* conference, and *20th/21st century French Studies Conferences*, among others and these experiences have enabled me to network and explore topics relevant to the fields of Francophone Cultural and Literary studies.

II. Silent Voices From the Past: Immigrant Autofiction in French Literature

In future projects, I would like to continue work concerning the *self*-representation of immigrants in France through literature and other cultural productions. In the last two centuries, France has been home to more immigrants than any other country in Europe and the mass migrations have transformed the economic, political, and cultural landscapes of society and given new life to xenophobic principles. This project would focus on colonial immigration from the beginning to the middle of the twentieth century and may expand to include a comparative analysis with other populations of non-colonial immigrants in France, including Italians, Turks, Portuguese, Spanish, and Polish. Although colonial workers in the Métropole are often associated with silence and submission, many were politically active and produced works that documented the migration experience.

Although my academic focus to date centers around contemporary French society and culture, notably that of 20th and 21st century French immigration as seen in literature and film, I am also interested in critical inquiry into such post-colonial subjects as the repatriation of colonist populations and post-independence immigration in France, as well as social and cultural integration for these groups. I am also well versed in Francophone literature from North Africa, Quebec, and the Caribbean. I plan to continue my Arabic language and cultural studies, and I would like to profit from summer study in Morocco in the near future. Colonial and post-colonial history and politics continue to fascinate me as does the representation of the colonialist project in literature; I am intrigued by the study of the gaze towards the Other across the centuries as well as the representations of the New World in literature.