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# Young People's Literature of Algerian Immigration in France

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## Young People's Literature of Algerian Immigration in France

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**Anne Schneider,**  
**"Young People's Literature of Algerian Immigration in France"**  
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**Ed. Dervila Cooke**  
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**Abstract:** In her article "Young People's Literature of Algerian Immigration in France" Anne Schneider discusses questions of language, hybridity, and heritage in some works for young people published in France about Algeria and/or Algerian-French identity, by Leïla Sebbar, Jean-Paul Nozière, Azouz Begag, and Michel Piquemal. She argues for the need for an intercultural education at primary school that uses literature about immigration to highlight questions of place, belonging, exile and language. Schneider's focus is on Begag's *Un train pour chez nous* (2001) and Piquemal's *Mon miel, ma douceur* (2004). These texts use linguistic hybridity and an emphasis on common human experiences of (im)migration and exile as intercultural strategies that allow young readers to recognize their common humanity, as well as to value cultural differences. They also promote a sense of heritage among readers with a connection to Arabic and North Africa.

**Anne SCHNEIDER**

## **Young People's Literature of Algerian Immigration in France**

In a 2009 article on building intercultural understanding through literature, Kathy Short notes that "through literature, children have the opportunity to go beyond a tourist perspective of gaining surface-level information about another culture. They are invited to immerse themselves in story worlds, gaining insights into how people feel, live, and think around the world. They also come to recognize their common humanity as well as to value cultural differences" (1). The aims of this article are twofold. Firstly, it seeks to provide a brief overview of questions of language, hybridity, and heritage in some key works for young people published in France about Algeria and/or Algerian-French identity, by Leila Sebbar, Jean-Paul Nozière, Azouz Begag, and Michel Piquemal. At the same time, and principally, it seeks to justify the need for an intercultural education that uses literature about immigration to highlight questions of place, belonging, exile, and language. The works discussed in this article highlight the encounter between France and Algeria, particularly in the context of writing for children and young people. If used sensitively, all can be rich educational tools that encourage empathy and awareness of the cultural other, in line with Short's comments above.

In 2001, I taught a series of classes on the literature of immigration for children at the IUFM (Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres) teacher training college in Strasbourg. These classes sought to incorporate intercultural education into the curriculum of future elementary school teachers. The aim was to enable teachers to adapt their teaching to communities of immigrant origin or descent living in France, and to help everyone in the classroom to accept each other's identity. One of the books I taught during that time was Azouz Begag's *Un train pour chez nous* (2001). I was struck by the fact that its linguistic hybridity had a profound effect on young readers of North African (Maghrebi) extraction. I also felt that its importance was universal, as this tale of return to an ancestral place affected all children who had experienced displacement in any way. The second part of this article seeks to show that this text and *Mon miel, ma douceur* by Michel Piquemal (2004) are ideal for educational use, particularly in the elementary classroom. These two texts work against cultural loss while also participating in what John Berry calls "intercultural strategies" (2.4) by promoting a sense of interaction between the Arabic and French languages. They also portray the very common human experience of belonging to several places. Before turning to Begag and Piquemal, I will provide a brief insight into some other important French-published literature for young people dealing with Algerian migration and with French-Algerian intercultural tensions. The aim in this first half of the article is to illustrate some of the different ways of connecting with Algeria among writers of such fiction in France, particularly in terms of the Algerian war. I also provide an insight into linguistic hybridity in Begag's literature as a whole.

In Algeria, decolonization from France led to huge historical upheaval. The events around independence, gained in 1962, were tragically conflicted, as discussed in Benjamin Stora's 2007 book *La Guerre des Mémoires*. As a nation strove to emerge from colonization and to redefine itself, there was a high casualty rate among ethnic Algerian and *pieds-noirs* (a French term for people of European descent who settled in Algeria, mainly after 1830), and internecine conflict between ethnic Algerians fighting on behalf of the French (*harkis*) and those who fought against them. The effects of the war created a large wave of outward migration, including the repatriated *pieds-noirs*, adding to the numbers of Algerians already in France. Many ethnically Arab and Berber North Africans had migrated to France's industrial regions to work as laborers and factory workers, particularly after the Second World War (Hargreaves, *Voices*). Literature is one way in which the community of North African origin in France can reconstruct and reappropriate its historical background. As psychoanalyst Nabile Farès observed at a conference entitled "Destinées voyageuses, La Patrie, La France, Le Monde" that took place in Paris and Strasbourg between 29 and 31 May 2002, "Le territoire romanesque réinvente la filiation."

Jean-Paul Nozière and Leila Sebbar are two distinguished authors in France who have written for young people about Algerian (im)migration and identity. As opposed to Begag, who is French-born, but of Algerian descent, Sebbar was born in Algeria and now lives in France, while the French-born Nozière taught in Algeria for two years of his life, in the post-independence years. While Begag displays a striking linguistic hybridity, Nozière's and Sebbar's Algerian texts are more affected by questions of exile and upheaval. However, questions of language still play an important part in their works, whether this be Arabic, French, or colloquial ways of speaking. It is useful to highlight the linguistic aspect of their work before turning to the question of language in Begag and Piquemal.

Sebbar was born in Algeria in 1941 to an Algerian father and a French mother. She grew up there until the age of 20 when she moved to Aix-en-Provence in 1961 during the war of independence. (Sebbar, "Biographie" <[http://clicnet.swarthmore.edu/leila\\_sebbar/biographie.html](http://clicnet.swarthmore.edu/leila_sebbar/biographie.html)>). She is best known as a writer of essays, fiction, and semi-autobiographical texts, but has also written for children and teenagers including *Ismaël* (1986, 1997), *Lorient-Québec* (1991, where the title short story deals with a young Vietnamese refugee in France on his way to Québec), and *J'étais enfant en Algérie, juin 1962*, published in 1997. Two collections of short stories: *Soldats* (1999) and *La Jeune fille au balcon* (1996, 2001) can be read by both an adult and teen readership, as can *La Seine était rouge* (1999), which deals with the October 1961 massacre of Algerians in Paris. Nostalgia for an Algerian childhood permeates her work and in 2014 she edited a collective volume entitled *L'Enfance des Français d'Algérie avant 1962*. In her own writings, an autobiographical viewpoint often prevails, with women characters being of notable importance. Violent emotions are often present. She herself is torn between France and Algeria because of her double nationality and identity. One of the most interesting aspects of Sebbar's writing is the feeling of being cut off from the Arabic language (she never learned it), and therefore from an important aspect of her heritage. In a 2011 article, Jane Hiddleston discusses the

writer's attitude to Arabic in her work, highlighting both her sense of separation from her father's memory and culture as a result of not knowing Arabic and the recurring focus on recapturing her Algerian heritage, for example in the 2003 text entitled *Je ne parle pas la langue de mon père*. A more obviously nostalgically titled work from 2007, *L'Arabe comme un chant secret*, is a collection of articles written by Sebbar gathered over 20 years, with additional text added in a 2010 edition. While Hiddleston makes the point that Sebbar's attitude to Arabic is not without ambivalence (she actively refused to learn the language and it can connote cultural and sexual division for her), there is clearly some kind of visceral connection with this unknown heritage language.

Sebbar's texts display a strong sense of exile from Algeria and Arabic culture. An important example of this in her children's books is her 1997 text, *J'étais enfant en Algérie, juin 1962*. In this picture book (illustrated by Catherine Belkadi), the experience of migration is channeled through a little girl who is beset by both hope and fear as she prepares to leave Algeria after the Evian Agreements of March 1962 and shortly before the referendum on Algerian independence. While the book deals with the war of independence and decolonization, the strongest emotion is that of nostalgia for the home country.

Nozière has written important work for young people where an attachment to Algeria as the home country is to the forefront. As a former teacher, he stated in an interview with Rachid Mokhtari in 2014 that the two years he and his wife spent teaching in Algeria (1967-1969) were the richest and most formative of their lives (Mokhtari <<http://jpnoziere.com/articles.htm>>). Born in 1943 in the Jura region of eastern France and now living in Burgundy, Nozière is a prolific and politically committed writer for a teenage readership, who also writes detective novels for adults. While his writings do not by any means focus exclusively on immigrant experience, the theme is nonetheless pervasive, for example in his youth literature about immigrant children of Chinese origin in France (*Tu peux pas rester là*, 2008), or from Eastern Europe (*Maman, j'ai peur*, 2016), or about uprooted children sent to France from an island in the Indian Ocean (*Que deviennent les enfants quand la nuit tombe?*, 2013). His books about Algeria deal less with immigration and more with the attachment to the home country, from both the ethnic Algerian and  *pied-noir* perspectives. The most famous of these, *Un été algérien*, (1990), is set in Setif, eastern Algeria, in 1958 during the war of independence. It is narrated by 15-year old Selim, who has a  *pied-noir* counterpart, Paul, also aged 15. The book broke some taboos when it first came out, because of its forthright discussion of the Algerian war in the context of youth literature, including an allusion to torture by the French soldiers. However, it has been highly successful. So too was a sister text, *Le Ville de Marseille* (1996), whose name refers to one of the well-known boats that travel between Algeria and France. Set in the year of independence, 1962, *Le Ville de Marseille* spotlights the attachment of a  *pied-noir* family to the farm they will have to leave, as they face repatriation to France. In 2014, Nozière's novel for adults, *Trabadja*, also dealt with the thorny question of the Algerian war, demonstrating how closely attached the author continues to feel to Algeria. The French Ministry of Education has recommended *Un Eté algérien* as a school text for children aged 14-15 and Gallimard has published useful online reading notes on the text for classroom or individual use ("Un Eté" <<http://www.gallimard-jeunesse.fr/medias/pdf/21018641598.pdf>>).

In *Un Eté algérien*, language is seen as a source of power in various ways. Arabic is presented as a secret language that gives the Algerian insurgents an advantage over the French soldiers who cannot understand them. Rather differently, language is also equated with power when M. Barine, the  *pied-noir* farm owner, speaks Arabic with his workers, as his principal interest in communicating with them stems from a desire to keep his farm running and thus to continue their subjugation. The main character, Salim, is an ideal informant for the Algerian rebels, as he has attended the French lycée and can mediate between both languages. The rebel Rachid, who coordinates the attack on the Barine farmholding, also appears to be able to read in French, as the notes Salim leaves for him must be in that language (Salim would have learned to write in French and not in Arabic). The farm mechanic Lakhdar who is a spy for the ethnic Algerians, slowly teaches himself to read, in the language of the colonizer, by attempting to work laboriously through Camus's *La Peste*. Camus's text is about the subjugation of a people, and Lakhdar's efforts to read it are symbolic of his desire for Algerian self-affirmation. The facts that *La Peste* was written in French (by a  *pied-noir* from Algeria) and that it has been seen as a metaphor for the Nazi occupation of France serve to underline the universal nature of the experience of domination, and to equate the French experience of the 1940s in some way with the colonization of Algeria by France. Further, literacy and education are key aspects of the text. The most powerless of the local population, including all of the women, cannot read and therefore have little agency. Interestingly, the text itself is educational and the Arabic words that pepper it are usually accompanied by footnotes. The 1998 Folio junior *édition spéciale* devotes two sections of its pedagogical dossier to a quiz on Arabic vocabulary. This seeks to erase any language barriers in the text and to allow young readers a sense of connection with the Arab-speaking characters. The text also includes a few words of  *pied-noir* dialect, adding to its linguistic inclusiveness.

Questions of identity and language also surface in the work of Begag, one of the foremost  *beur* (French-born people of North African origin) writers of young people's literature in France. Most of his works focus on the experiences of natives of France who are of immigrant descent. Begag grew up in Villeurbanne, a suburb of Lyon, of Algerian parents in 1957. He lived in a rough shanty town (for which the Arab term  *chaâba* is used) in the suburbs and then moved into a council estate ("projects" in US-American English). He is best known as a sociologist, novelist, and former government minister. Some of his texts have been widely read by young audiences, including schoolchildren. He has also authored many important socio-political essays and collections of interviews. His books do not contain violently negative feelings, yet are sometimes underlain by sense of uncertainty in relation to identity, or at least a questioning of this (when his heroes return to Algeria during their holidays they feel more French than Algerian, for example). His linguistic choices are often of North African origin but sometimes belong to a wider francophone linguistic field. Importantly, they sometimes include local Lyonnais slang, as can

be seen in the title of his successful first novel *Le Gone du Chaâba* (1986), an autobiographical work which was adapted for the cinema by Christophe Ruggia in 1998. In this title, the colloquial Lyonnais *gone* (meaning "boy") is juxtaposed with the Arabic *chaâba* in order to emphasize the hybrid nature of the main character and his rootedness in both local and heritage cultures. The main character here is a manifestation of in-betweenness, which I have previously discussed as *l'entre-deux* in writings about migration and immigration.

Begag began his professional career as a sociologist specializing in the problematics of immigration. He became known for his political interventions, notably as Minister for Equal Opportunities from 2005 to 2007 and now works at the prestigious CNRS (Centre National de Recherche Scientifique). A popular man, he is often invited on chat shows on television to talk about the harsh social conditions and ghettoization of the *banlieue* (disadvantaged multi-ethnic areas in outlying areas of France's principal cities). In his 2002 book, *Les Déroutés. Ces Français de banlieue qui ont réussi*, he focuses on interviews with people in their forties of North African extraction and of *banlieue* background. All were young in the 1970s and 1980s and all have become successful. *Les Déroutés* explains the need for local youngsters to avoid becoming "rusted to the spot" and to take heart from those who have managed to succeed. As Carole Netter and Brigitte Lane point out in their 2007 presentation of his work, one of Begag's main concerns is to provide positive role models for young people of Maghrebi extraction in France (<<http://clinet.swarthmore.edu/litterature/moderne/begag/presentation.html>>). The word "dérouté" means not only to remove the rust from something but is also a slang word for "to give a thrashing," and may also mean "to get up and stretch one's legs". The term "se débrouiller" (to manage to succeed in a difficult situation) is also suggested through word association. Through the neologism of *déroutés*, Begag therefore seems to be suggesting that young people of immigrant extraction need to stand up and give themselves a shaking down in order to avoid becoming stuck in the ghetto with no prospects of employment or social mobility. The role models he provides may be instrumental in this shaking up or thrashing out of issues.

A strong element of word play is present in Begag's ruminations on his linguistic and cultural Arab heritage. In his 1995 novel, *Quand on est mort, c'est pour toute la vie* (a work that like *Le Gone du Chaâba* was not aimed specifically at teenagers but can certainly be read by them), a character states his need to "Retrouver mon arabe généalogique" (34). Begag plays here on the closeness in sound between the word "arbre" as in family tree and the word "arabe." Despite the use of linguistic puns, the quest for identity and the importance of the Arab heritage are clear.

In *Zenzela* (1992), Begag also plays with language, demonstrating other aspects of his linguistic hybridity. He slips in Oriental clichés and representations (*babooshes* [Oriental shoes] for instance), and also refers to other francophone words and phrases. For example, the Algerian narrator calls his car "un char à grisettes," meaning a chariot for young women of easy virtue (34, 75), which is a reference to the use of the word "char" for "car" in modern Québécois French. Here, Begag appears to be doing something very interesting by coupling the Québécois term "char" with the very French term "grisette" which has been used in France at least as far back as the 1600s, displaying an interest in linguistic reinvention while also appearing to view language as a rich resource with multiple origins. Begag also mixes French and Arabic or a blend of both, to merge together different voices, divergent points of view (for example between parent and child), and various linguistic registers. As such, he can be read in the perspective of Bakhtinian polyphony. In *Le Gone du Chaâba*, the father uses the language spoken by the community of Algerian origin in Lyon, mixing French and Arabic, while the son's language is both broader and less markedly "ethnic": the classroom language he learns at school is mixed with local Lyonnais French slang and a little Arabic. The father also pronounces French words in an Algerian accent, for example "la téléfiziou" (for "télévision") and "li zalumettes" (for "les allumettes"), which adds a comical note (Abdel-Jaouad)—something only an author of Maghrebi descent could allow him or herself. Interestingly, in order to make his original though sometimes disconcerting way of writing understood by the general reader, Begag was asked by his editor at Le Seuil to insert in this first novel a glossary of both slang and foreign words so that the average French person would not get lost (Hargreaves, "La Littérature" 25).

The text that I taught in the IUFM class was Begag's 2001 picture book, *Un Train pour chez nous* (with illustrations by Catherine Louis). Another linguistically exotic text, it is aimed at readers of approximately ten years of age. As in *Le Gone du Chaâba* and other Begag texts, words in Arabic are present in the text. It tells the story of a family of Algerian origin living in Lyon. Each summer, they go back to the ancestral village, Setif, in Algeria, travelling for twenty four hours, by train, then by boat then by train again, and then arriving in the village by foot. The story is told by a water carrier who sells water to the passengers of a train. At this point, I would like to show how this book can be used as a class text at primary level, not only for the purposes of affirming one's heritage, or the importance of heritage, but as a way of drawing on universal experience. During the classes I gave at the IUFM in 2001, an eleven-year old schoolgirl read the text aloud to her classmates. The girl who read the text was initially reluctant and shy to speak. Yet her attitude changed dramatically as she became caught up in this hybrid text. As she came to words in Arabic, she started to smile and to look more confident. Her reading became full of emotion and she placed her hand on her heart. Through this encounter with her heritage language in a French text, she was able to feel in tune with her own experience and her imagination was able to blossom as she read. Something as simple as the natural use of words in Arabic allowed her to enter Begag's imaginary world in a positive way. Equally, children who were not of Maghrebi origin felt encouraged to reflect on their own situation: for instance, Matthieu, a boy from Alsace, was moved to tell the class that he was about to leave the region to settle in Paris. Reading the book seems to have helped him put words on this family event which appeared to him to be a sort of exile, with Alsace as the ancestral home in place of Begag's Algeria. The book worked as a conduit for his own pain, through his identification with the characters in the novel. Through the example of

Matthieu, we see that this type of book is not simply useful for children with direct experience of immigration and exile, but can be profoundly affecting for all children, whatever their ethnic background. All can be torn by exile and can wish in their own way to remain connected with the place that has been lost. All will probably encounter children in their surroundings who experience a similar situation. All can benefit positively from reading about such situations.

Piquemal, who like Nozière is a prolific writer for children with a background as a teacher, was born in 1954 in Béziers in the South of France of French parentage. His beautifully produced picture book illustrated by Elodie Nohen *Mon miel, ma douceur* (2004) is fascinating for what it has to say about memory, its approach to language, and its merging of European and Arab cultures. Like Begag's *Un train pour chez nous*, this book appears to be primarily aimed at children of Maghrebi extraction, but can be used as a universal pedagogical tool to discuss experiences of upheaval and exile and ways of connecting with heritage, and to show how languages and cultures can cohabit. It was published by Didier Jeunesse, one of the first publishing houses in France to enter the intercultural market, with picture books and with CDs of nursery rhymes. Piquemal has spoken of himself as a politically committed writer (<[http://www.michelpiquemal.com/IMGS/NOUVEL\\_EDUC\\_187\\_AVRIL-p52-54.pdf](http://www.michelpiquemal.com/IMGS/NOUVEL_EDUC_187_AVRIL-p52-54.pdf)>). *Mon miel, ma douceur* is political in its own way, in that it is committed to inclusiveness. The current edition of *Mon Miel, ma douceur* has a mysterious-looking cover, with a dark blue background that can be divided into two parts. In the upper part, at sky level, a grey-haired woman clad in black is holding a little girl in white. In the lower part, a fortified city with minarets and a mosque with a crescent moon stand out against the starry sky. The whole book is bathed in blue of various shades: indigo blue, dark blue, greyish blue, greenish blue, light blue, underlining the strong presence of both the sea and the sky. Even the outlines of the characters and objects are blue, highlighting the contrast between the yellow earth and the deep blue sea. From a symbolic perspective, the story is clearly part of a tradition of migration narratives and is simple to understand for very young readers. As is usual in this kind of literature, the book opens with a reference to a departing boat (the book has no page numbers): "Les parents de Khadija étaient nés de l'autre côté de la mer...Et tous les étés, ils prenaient le bateau de Marseille pour aller voir leur famille dans le bled, près de Chott-el-Djerid." The book closes on the following image: "Khadija monta sur le pont. Dans la nuit, on apercevait au lointain les lumières de la grande ville blanche." Through the motif of the boat, the text plays in a universal way on the theme of exile and return found in many texts about migration and is reminiscent of traditional tales in which migrants go back to their native village. The white city may refer to many cities in the Maghreb (Tunis or Tangiers spring to mind, or Algiers, the epitome of the white city) which broadens the scope of the book to the experience of North African migration in general, although the geographical details provided at the beginning of the story situate it in the Tunisian region of Chott-el-Djerid.

Just as *Un train pour chez nous* tells a universal story about return to an ancestral place, *Mon miel, ma douceur* taps into the universal need to mourn a lost loved one, as well as the need to remain connected with ancestral heritage. In this case, this occurs mainly through folk memories but also through language. Every year, little Khadija (who, unlike her parents, is French-born) visits her grandmother Zhora, who "incarnait pour elle la douceur de miel du pays." With her stories, nursery rhymes, and pastries, the grandmother passes on the culture of her country. However, one day the grandmother dies. Two days later, Khadija receives a tunic in the mail, patiently embroidered by her grandmother. This takes up a classic European mythical thread, echoing the shroud woven and unwoven by Penelope while waiting for Ulysses' return. The tunic will help Khadija mourn her grandmother. She slips it on at night-time or when she is feeling sad and it soothes her sleep with dreams of the songs and stories her grandmother used to share with her. The ancestral country is, for Khadija, "ce pays qui était un peu le sien." However, her mother does not speak in Arabic to her, and it is only through the grandmother's interaction with her in Arabic that it becomes a language that she half understands. However, when the family receive a telegram bearing news of grandmother Zhora's death the mother reverts for a moment to "la langue du pays" in order to comfort her child. It is important that the last page of the story sees Khadija singing in Arabic a lullaby that Zhora taught her. Her grandmother has appeared to her in a dream asking her to throw the tunic into the sea, and Khadija sings the lullaby as she throws it over the ship's rail while travelling back to North Africa. She has no need for the tunic anymore, as she has completed her work of mourning. She has internalized the memory of her grandmother along with the parts of the grandmother's culture she needs, and elements of the Arabic language. The tunic becomes the grandmother, in a conflation of the definite article "la": "Elle devait la laisser aller retrouver la paix de la mer."

The way in which the text is presented and laid out is a special feature of this picture book, as are the different calligraphical styles. In *Mon Miel, ma douceur*, all the words uttered by the grandmother are written in her native tongue, Arabic. They are also phonetically transcribed with a semi-ornate calligraphy, which enables the reader to read the Arabic text. The French translation is placed opposite the Arabic. In this text, three colors are used: words in Arabic (the grandmother's tongue) are written in blue, the phonetic transcription is in red or yellow and the French translation is in brown. The innovative manner in which the passages in Arabic are used lend a striking originality to the book. The Arabic text clearly cohabits with the text telling the main story, sometimes situated on the right hand side of the page while the text telling the story is on the left, or vice versa, or at the end of a paragraph or at the bottom of a page. Because the text alternates between the main narrative thread and isolated sentences translated from Arabic, the reader must move back and forth between the two types of writing. Perry Nodelman notes that such changes in position alters the rhythm of response to the events we are learning about (*Words* 54). This gives further prominence to the Arabic words, because of the slower pace at which the text is read. Furthermore, the graphic design means that the phonetic transcription of the Arabic text is placed immediately before the Arabic writing, which encourages the reader to try to read the words in Arabic. The snippets in Arabic are drawn from nursery rhymes,

lullabies, proverbs, names of sweet delicacies, intertextual references, memories of spoken words, words spoken by the grandmother, terms of endearment, pleas, words from the start of fairy tales, and so on. The metatextual value of these bits and pieces evokes many layers of meaning, which gives an unusual depth to the story. Many obvious references are made, for example to Scheherazade, to fairy tales about the djinns, to traditional nursery rhymes and lullabies, and to an Arabic proverb "Qui a assuré sa descendance ne meurt pas." This last reference is particularly symbolic, as the text promotes the transmission of heritage from one generation to the next.

There are thus several ways to read this text. On one level, the passages in Arabic provide an opportunity to look back and offer a pause in the process of reading as well as constituting an extension of the main story. However, the passages in Arabic might also be read on their own, separately from the main narrative. The reading process is then two-fold: while it is neutral in the third-person narrative it takes on a cultural and emotional dimension with fragments of texts in Arabic and translated from Arabic, as they construct an intimate and imaginative representation of the ancestral country. These cultural and intertextual references make up the multiple voices that can be heard in the book. Along with the emphasis on the work of mourning, which is useful for children of any background, the book sings a song of exile and allows for new imaginative configurations of cultural identity for any immigrants or descendants of immigrants who may feel dispossessed of it, whether through the process of acculturation in a foreign land or through the generation gap.

*Un train pour chez nous* and *Mon miel, ma douceur* are examples of an important body of literature for young people in France that deals both with the experiences stemming from an immigrant background and the pleasure of reconnecting with heritage. Language functions as a particular site of memory in these texts. There is a link between the comforting sense of linguistic recognition of Arabic by the little girl in the IUFM classroom and Khadija's reconnection with her grandmother in memory while singing a song in Arabic. Sebbar's pain at not knowing her father's tongue might have been softened somewhat had she been exposed to a book like Piquemal's as a child, where Arabic is introduced naturally and deftly, and with great beauty. These picture books use linguistic hybridity to provide an inclusive space where young people of all origins can see a mirror of their own experiences and go some way towards understanding the children around them. Along with the focus on heritage, the linguistic inclusivity of these texts makes them useful for all readers, particularly, but not exclusively, those who have migrated or who have more than one language in their family background.

Children should be attuned to their origins and to their heritage yet the tradition of oral communication between generations has largely been lost, partly due to exile, where grands-parents stay in Algeria and the child grows up in France. Here the literature of migration and immigration is a useful means of bridging gaps. Such literature tells stories about France, about integration, about diversity and about the native or ancestral country. It builds a connection between two imaginary constructs of the French nation: Algeria and France. This article has focused on the Algeria-France dynamic yet the texts discussed might be used with all children of immigrant background, in relation to their native country or that of their parents. Thus, one may consider that children's literature and literature for young people is valuable insofar as "elle accompagne, voire initie, la réflexion sur le témoignage, la transmission, la mémoire, la filiation" (Milkovitch-Rioux 91). This is particularly true of the literature of immigration.

With both Begag's and Piquemal's texts, the texts will also be read by French readers without a direct or recent background of (im)migration, especially in a classroom situation. Many such young readers will be unaware of Maghrebi realities. The literature of migration and immigration for young readers must therefore adopt a didactic perspective. In the case of Algeria, it can also usefully instruct those readers about the experiences and effects of the Algerian war, a period in their history which has remained relatively taboo until recently. It can also allow readers to reflect on the experience of cultural loss that often accompanies immigration, and the partial reconnection with heritage that is possible. As Farès formulated it at the abovementioned 2002 conference, "la fiction est la suture des blessures de l'histoire." Young people's literature about migration and immigration is thus a highly useful educational medium, and at the same time a literary object and a tool of communication, and a vehicle for debate and discussion around the issues of citizenship and identity. However, we should also ask ourselves whether a text that provides a sense of valorization for minority ethnic readers necessarily provides an *equal* sense of understanding to majority ethnic readers. It is also important to recognize that a given text may impact different readers in varied ways, depending on their ethnic background, gender, and other factors.

Much useful material has already been made available online by organizations such as the Centre national de recherche pédagogique (CNDP) and its regional counterparts the Centres régionaux de recherche pédagogique (CRDP), for example the excellent 2010 dossier on teaching the history of immigration ("Enseignement"

<[http://www.cndp.fr/crdp-rennes/crdp/crdp\\_dossiers/dossiers/HistoireDeL\\_Immigration/](http://www.cndp.fr/crdp-rennes/crdp/crdp_dossiers/dossiers/HistoireDeL_Immigration/)>). With new history curricula in France's middle and high-schools, it is to be hoped that the literature of migration and immigration will continue to develop as a hugely stimulating resource (as the Gallimard online educational sheet on *Un été algérien* demonstrates), not only to complement archives, images, and historical documents, but also for its intrinsic value to promote inclusiveness, transmission of memory, and the understanding of historical fact, and as a vehicle for encountering the other.

To conclude, in her 2014 handbook, *Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication*, Jane Jackson notes that "lack of familiarity with signs and symbols," including the foreign written word, is one of the primary reasons for culture shock (194). Piquemal's *Mon miel, ma douceur* upends this notion of culture shock most strikingly by providing phonetic transcriptions of Arabic along with French and Arabic, and by attributing a positive value to Arabic. Penelope Gardner-Chloros and Daniel Weston note that "in communities of immigrant origin, bilingual speech modes are often cultivated and celebrated,

and their representation in literature may serve purposes that go beyond simply representing the speech-modes of their members" (187). This is certainly the case in *Un train pour chez nous* and *Mon miel, ma douceur*. In both texts, bilingualism not only reinforces a sense of heritage among those of immigrant descent but promotes cultural inclusiveness by giving a presence and a literary worth to the use of Arabic words and phrases.

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