ALTRALANG Journal
e-ISSN: 2710-8619 p-ISSN: 2710-7922
Volume 5 Issue 3 / December 2023 pp. 219-229
DOI: https://doi.org/10.52919/altralang.v5i3.363

The Political Significance of Transnational Experience in the *Migritude* Novel: Alain Mabanckou's *Bleu Blanc Rouge* and *Black Bazar*

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Received: 08/11/2023, **Accepted:** 31/12/2023, **Published:** 31/12/2023

ABSTRACT: *Migritude refers to both the theme of migration at the heart of a type ofmigrant novel that started to develop from the1980s and became popular from the 2000s and the condition of expats of its authors. As Chevrier observes, migritude writers are native of Africa but live in western countries. Migritude novels promote equality and anti-racism and at the centre of their narrative there is the condition of the African migrant in Europe as well as the legacy of colonialism in both Africa and Europe. This article examines the political significance of the migritude novel through the analysis of Bleu Blanc Rouge (1998) and Black Bazar (2009) by Alain Mabanckou, one of the most influential migritude writers. Through the transnational experience of the characters of the two books, Mabanckou denounces the difficulties faced by Congolese migrants in Paris and the psychological effects of colonialism which are still affecting the African populations of the ex-colonies. Migrants do not only struggle to integrate in European countries, but they also have internalised a complex of inferiority towards white people that triggers in them a form of racism against themselves. Bleu Blanc Rouge and Black Bazar calls for the deconstruction of racial essentialism, which is the root cause of racism, and advocates for the creation of a new society based on equality, reciprocal respect, support, and recognition.*

KEYWORDS: Migritude; Alain Mabanckou; Bleu Blanc Rouge; Black Bazar; transnational experience; racial essentialism; equality.

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ALTRALANG Journal
Volume 5 Issue 3 / December 2023

Introduction

This article explores the political significance of transnational experience in the *migritude* novel through a reading of *Bleu Blanc Rouge* and *Black Bazar*, two novels by contemporary Franco-Congolese author Alain Mabanckou, published in 1998 and 2009 respectively. "Migritude" is a neologism coined by Jacques Chevrier in 2004 in "« Afriques(s)-Sur-Seine » : Autour De La notion De "migritude"" to describe migrant novels by francophone African writers living in Western countries that began to appear in the 1980s and marked the literary scene around the turn of the millennium. As Chevrier (2004) puts it, the term "migritude" "renvoie à la thématique de l'immigration, qui se trouve au cœur des récits africains contemporains, mais aussi au statut d'expatriés de la plupart de leurs producteurs qui ont délaissé Dakar et Douala au profit de Paris, Caen ou Pantin." (Chevrier, 2004, p. 96) ("refers to the theme of migration at the heart of contemporary African narratives, but also to the condition of expats of the majority of their producers who have abandoned Dakar and Douala for Paris, Caen or Pantin" (author's translation)). However, as Chevrier himself acknowledges, the authors of the *migritude* move not only to France but to other Western countries. As he observes, *migritude* writers "tendent [en effet,] aujourd'hui, à devenir des nomades évoluant entre plusieurs pays, plusieurs langues et plusieurs cultures […]" (Chevrier, 2004, p. 100) ("tend [indeed] today to become nomadic and evolve between different countries, languages and cultures" (author's translation)). *Migritude* writers travel around the world, are multicultural, and produce their texts within a transnational frame that goes beyond national boundaries. This is reflected in the characters of their novels, whose life and identity are shaped by their migration and relationships across countries.

In addition to Mabanckou, other *migritude* writers include Fatou Diome, Tierno Monénembo, Abdourahman A. Waberi, Calixthe Beyala, Kossi Efoui, Sami Tchack, Daniel Biyaoula, and Henri Lopes (Mankou, 2021; Zanganeh, 2021). Although *migritude* writers share the anti-racist values and desires for a more equalitarian world of *négritude* writers, their political and literary projects differ widely. This is because *migritude* intellectuals face a completely different world to those of the *négritude*. *Négritude* was a literary, cultural, and political movement that took shape between the two world wars thanks to the editorial activity of Aimé Césaire, who coined the neologism "négritude", Lépold Sédar Senghor and Léon Gontran Damas (Furgiule and Gill, 2008; Martineau, 2021). In their works, *négritude* authors denounced racism and promoted the rediscovery of African culture and traditions in response to the colonial oppression (Bertini et al., 2022). During colonisation, the populations colonised were systematically subjugated, exploited and controlled, and their culture and traditions brutally erased and replaced with those of the colonised.

Migritude authors write in the contemporary transnational, globalised and post-colonial context; their works are no longer directed towards the coloniser but rather aim at investigating the living conditions of migrants in Western countries and the legacies of colonialism in the ex-colonies, as well as in Europe (Chevrier 94–100; Muoto, 2019).

This focus on migration and the effects of colonisation crosses the pages of *Bleu Blanc Rouge* and *Black Bazar*. Without openly expressing any opinion or judgment, as his predecessors often did, Mabanckou uses the transnational experience of the characters in the two novels with three aims. First, to denounce the consequences of the colonial past in Republic of the Congo and France; second, to criticise European policies on matters of migration; third, to call for the deconstruction of racial essentialism as both the cause of racism and an obstacle to the rise of a universal brotherhood. These points will be further discussed in the following three sub-sections.

The Difficulties facing the Migrant

Bleu Blanc Rouge tells the story of Massala, a young Congolese man who leaves the Republic of the Congo for Paris. Massala migrates to Paris under the influence of Charles Moki, a Congolese friend, who left his country years before. Each summer, Moki entertains friends and family back home with his tales about Paris. During one of his visits to the Congo, he convinces Massala to relocate to France. With family and friends, Moki pretends to lead a wealthy life and to live in a luxurious apartment in the French capital. This aspect of Massala's life appears quite credible as, with the money he sends to his family, his parents have managed to finish work on the house that his father had begun building a couple of years earlier but could not afford to complete, together with the fact they are the only ones in the neighbourhood who are equipped with water and electricity – as suggested by the following extract:

> Nous vîmes que c'était Moki, lors d'un de ses retours au pays, qui décida la poursuite des travaux. Le Parisien surprit son père. Il nous surprit. Jamais on n'avait vu une initiative aussi diligente dans le quartier. Il loua les services d'une dizaine de maçons que des honoraires alléchants et payés d'avance incitèrent à travailler, de leur propre chef, depuis le matin jusqu'à très tard dans la nuit avec des lampes tempête tenues par des apprentis qui bâillaient de sommeil. Moki surveillait de près l'avancement de ces travaux. […]
>
> Le résultat ne se fit pas attendre.
>
> Au bout de deux mois et demi, nous nous réveillâmes tous en face d'une immense villa blanche avec des fenêtres et des portes peintes en vert.
>
> Moki fit mettre l'électricité et une pompe à eau dans leur parcelle. Rares étaient les maisons éclairées et pourvue d'eau potable. L'installation de cette pompe à eau devint utile pour le quartier. […] Les jeunes se réunissaient le soir dans une rue principale, devant la villa, pour tirer parti de l'éclairage et discuter toute la nuit jusqu'à ce que le père de Moki vienne mettre le holà. (Mabanckou, 1998, pp. 42–44)

> We saw that it was Moki, during one of his trips back home, who decided to resume construction. The Parisian surprised his father. He surprised us. None of us had ever seen such an industrious undertaking in the neighbourhood before. He hired a dozen masons who were enticed to work by getting paid in advance and in amounts that made our mouths water. They worked under their own boss from morning until very late at night by the light of lanterns held by apprentices who swayed with sleepiness. Moki closely supervised the work. He gave in to the workers' whims. […]
>
> It didn't take long to see the results. After two and a half months, we woke up in front of an immense white villa. The doors and shutters were painted green.
>
> […] Moki installed electricity and a water pump on their lot. Houses with lighting and access to potable water were rare. […] Young people hung out in the evening on the main street in front of the villa to take advantage of the light and talk the night away until Moki's father came out and put an end to that. (Mabanckou, 1998/2013, pp. 24–25)

However, the reality is very different, as Massala finds out at his own expense. When he arrives in Moki's house in Paris, he discovers that his friend is living in a squalid squat shared with other African migrants in an unoccupied block of flats – as Massala explains:

> Je n'y croyais pas. Je ne voulais pas y croire. […] Nous habitons là, métro Alésia, au septième étage, dans une chambre de bonne du quatorzième arrondissement, rue du Moulin-Vert. (Mabanckou, 1998, p.134)
>
> I couldn't believe it. I did not want to believe it. Yet I lived there for several months. […] We lived there Métro stop Alésia, on the eighth floor, in a maid's room in the fourteenth arrondissement rue du Moulin-Vert. (Mabanckou, 1998/2013, p. 89)
>
> Nous n'avions pas d'ascenseur pour arriver jusqu'au septième. L'immeuble n'était pas éclairé et il exhalait la moisissure. Il n'avait pas non plus d'autres occupants que nous. […]
> Je n'avais pu dénombrer tous les occupants de la chambre. Ce n'était pas les mêmes. Nous étions plus d'une douzaine de compatriotes à coucher dans cette pièce exiguë. (Mabanckou, 1998, pp.136–137)
>
> We had no elevator to get all the way to the eight floor. The building was poorly lit and smelled of mildew. There were no other occupants besides us. […] I was not able to count all the occupants in the room. They were not always the same. There were more than a dozen compatriots sleeping in that tiny room. (Mabanckou, 1998/2013, pp. 90–91)

Initially, Massala is shocked and wants to write a letter to his family to let them know how they are living in France. Yet, Moki discourages him so as to safeguard the image of the migrant as a "battant" ("fighter") and a "Parisien" ("Parisian") (Mabanckou, 1998, p. 132, author's translation). As Robert Nathan (2018) writes, migrants 'are under intense pressure to verify their ostensible success in France to their home communities' (p. 339). The idea that emerges from the novel is that African people who leave the continent are very well regarded by their community; they are considered to be strong and equipped with some extraordinary qualities. However, if they do not integrate in the host country as expected or decide to return to live in their homeland, they become the object of ferocious prejudice and comments, which is why Moki pretends in front of his family and friends that he leads a completely different life and discourages Massala from telling the truth to his family. Even convincing Massala to relocate to France was justified by this. Moki convince Massala to move to France with the wish to reinforce the image of himself as a fighter, as a person who managed to succeed in France and that could help other people to achieve the same result.

When Massala's residential documents expire, Moki helps him to obtain false ones through a criminal organisation to which he is affiliated – Moki earns the money that he sends home from illicit trafficking. Obtaining these documents is costly and Massala is forced to accept to work for Moki's gang.

One day, Massala is arrested by two policemen in civilian dress who stop him on the street. The men take him away without saying a word and ignore his questions.

Massala is taken into a detention centre, one of the centres in which European governments detain unauthorised migrants up to 18 months before repatriating them. With this happening to Massala, and as we are told towards the end of the book, he is sent back to the Republic of the Congo. (Njoya, 2009; Nathan, 2018).

By describing the way Massala is treated in the detention centre, Mabanckou indirectly denounces the 'Return Directive' legislation as well as the irrationality of the existence of borders. Every day, African people leave their countries for Europe hoping to find better living conditions and democracy (Njoya,

2009). However, their expectations are not usually met. They are confronted with the widespread racism of populist movements and reactionary governments that, although they present themselves as defenders of human rights, they often violate these rights with their migration policies (Njoya, 20009; Carrey-Conte, 2023).

Migrants are physically and psychologically abused in detention centres, as exemplified by Massala's experience. (Global Detention Project; World Health Organisation, 2022) Detention of immigrants is harmful to health. Guards, who embody the French state, make fun of him for shivering in the cold and, as mentioned above, they ignore his questions, as suggested by these quotes:

> En fin de matinée, une petite neige blanche tapissait le sol et s'écrasait sous nos pieds. Les miens étaient humides, gelés et ankylosés. Je ne les sentais plus. Je ne portais pas des vêtements de saison. Une chemise bleue en toile avec un tee-shirt noir à l'intérieur. Un pantalon jean usé aux genoux, des pantoufles Spring Court aux pieds. Je grelottais. Les deux hommes s'en moquaient éperdument, parés de brodequins militaires, de lourds manteaux, de gants fourrés et de bonnets qui couvraient leurs oreilles comme s'ils traversaient la Sibérie. (Mabanckou, 1998, p. 20)

> In the late morning, a dusting of white snow carpeted the ground and crunched under our feet. Mine were damp, frozen, and numb. I couldn't feel them anymore. I wasn't dressed for the weather. A blue cloth shirt over a black T-shirt. Jeans worn through at the knees, Spring Court sneakers on my feet. I shivered. The two men made great fun of this, decked out in military boots, heavy coats, lined gloves and hats that covered their ears as if they were crossing Siberia. (Mabanckou, 1998/2013, pp. 8–9)

> D'abord, je vous le demande, dites-moi pourquoi nous sommes ici ? Que vous ont-ils dit quand vous m'avez embarqué dans la voiture, répondez-moi messieurs, répondez ! Mais répondez donc ! Ce sera pour aujourd'hui ? Pour ce soir ? Pour demain ? Ou alors pour après-demain ?
> Silence.
> Je voulais m'exprimer, expliquer convaincre, leur dire de m'accorder quelques minutes, juste quelques minutes. […] Un mot de plus et le prétexte pour le coup de matraque était trouvé. (Mabanckou, pp. 21–22)

> First of all, I demand that you tell me why we're here. What did they say to you when you shoved me into the car? Answer me, sirs! Answer! Come on, give me an answer! Is this just for today? Until this evening? Until tomorrow? Or until the day after tomorrow? Silence. I wanted to express myself, explain, convince, tell them to give me a few minutes, just a few minutes. To ask a favor: take me back to rue du Moulin-Vert in the fourteenth arrondissement. (Mabanckou, 1998/2013, pp. 9–10)

In *Black Bazar*, Mabanckou expresses another criticism of French, or more generally European, migration policies. The novel is presented as the journal of Fessologue, a Congolese man, who decides to write a book after his wife escapes with another man (Mabanckou, 2009, pos. 103). The Paris depicted in *Black Bazar* is that of a compartmentalised city. In *Les Damnés de la Terre*, Fanon (2002) used the word

"compartment" to describe the spatial organisation of the colonies (pp. 40–44). Colonial cities were divided into distinct compartments, that is to say into distinct areas: those inhabited by colonial communities and those inhabited by natives: "Le monde colonial est un monde compartimenté. Sans doute est-il superflu, sur le plan de la description, de rappeler l'existence de villes indigènes et de villes européennes, d'écoles pour indigènes et d'écoles pour Européens, comme il est superflu de rappeler l'apartheid en Afrique du Sud" (Fanon, 2002, pp. 40–44) ("The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need not recall apartheid in South Africa" (author's translation)). The Paris described in the book suggests that the organisation of the city echoes that of the colonial city, denouncing the fact that, although the French government, like other European governments, pretends to promote the integration of migrants, it applies similar urban schemes and segregate Africans in the suburbs (Simon, 1998; Pan Ké Schon, 2011; Monno and Serreli, 2020; Liebig and Spielvogel, 2021). In his journal, Fessologue talks about his daily life. He lives in a neighbourhood inhabited only by migrants, mostly Africans, and before meeting Sarah, a Franco-Belgian woman with whom he starts a relationship towards the end of the novel, he does not have any close relationship with white European people. After work, he goes to the Jip's, an Afro-Cuban club only patronised by foreigners, and all his friends are from ex-European colonies, as suggested by their names: Paul du Grand Congo, Yves «L'Ivoirien Tout Court», Vladmir Le Camerounais, Pierrot Le Petit Blanc du petit Congo, a white man from Congo-Kinshasa, and Patrick «Le Finlandais», an African man who claims to have married a Finnish woman that Fessologue has never seen.

An analogous picture of Paris emerges from *Bleu Blanc Rouge*. Massala, Moki, the members of Moki's criminal organisation, and the other migrants they share the squat with, form a closed black community that has no real contact with the white Paris. Despite Moki's pretence of being well integrated into Parisian society, and even claiming that in Paris everyone knows him by name, he lives at the margins of society. He works for a criminal gang and is the "landlord" of a squat that hosts African migrants who do not have legal permanent residence. He is not the landlord as it is an occupied building, though he acts as if he is because he takes control of it. All this conveys an idea of Parisian society as fragmented into two disparate Black and White communities of white and black.

Additionally, without justifying the fact that Massala opts for the illegal path to access the documents necessary to remain in France, his experience is used by Mabanckou to denounce the bureaucratic difficulties of gaining access to foreign countries encountered by millions of people around the world.

The Psycho-Social Effects of Racial Essentialism

Although the Republic of the Congo has been independent from France since 1960, it is still affected by the consequences of colonialism; the country faces political and economic issues and there is a widespread sense of inferiority and self-hate within its population (Nathan 2018; Perspective Monde). As Frantz Fanon suggests throughout *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* and *Les Damnés de la Terre*, colonization not only perturbed the political structures and economic systems of the colonised territories but also the psychological sphere of their inhabitants. (Fanon, 1952; Fanon 2002) Both *Bleu Blanc Rouge* and *Black Bazar* deal with these psychological effects of colonisation.

Moki's father was educated in a colonial school, where he internalised the colonial ideology and developed an admiration for France, as testified by the fact that he knows all of the presidents of France by heart and named his son Charles in homage to Charles de Gaulle (Mabanckou, 1998). Moki grew up with the myth of France that he learned through his father's tales and the newspapers that presented France as a paradise on earth that he brought home from the hotel run by French people where he worked, and this

ultimately led him to quit his country (Mabanckou, 1998; Whitol de Wenden, 2002; Gandoulou quoted in Miconi, 2015).

The myth of France that accompanies Moki's life causes him to feel an unconscious sense of inferiority in relation to the French, and to white people more generally. Throughout the novel, Moki expresses this psychological discomfort through both his rejection of Congolese habits and customs and the annihilation of his body. As the narrator notices, Moki bleaches his skin:

> Moki était arrivé. Ce que nous remarquions de prime abord, c'était la couleur de sa peau. Rien à voir avec la nôtre, mal entretenue, mangée par la canicule, huilée et noirâtre comme du manganèse. La sienne était blanchie à outrance. Il arguait que l'hiver y était pour quelque chose. Plus tard, en France, je sus qu'il appliquait sur tout le corps des produits à base d'hydroquinone. (Mabanckou, 1998, p. 6)

> Moki arrived. The first thing we noticed was the color of his skin. Nothing at all like ours, poorly cared for, devoured by the scorching sun, oily and as black as manganese. His was extraordinarily white. He argued that they didn't have winter over there for nothing. Later, in France, I learned that he applied hydroquinone products to his entire body. (Mabanckou, 1998/2013, p. 37)

Lightening the skin can be seen as an extreme form of internalised racism. Colonisation consists in "the acquisition of political dominion over another country or group of people with the primary goal of economic advancement" (Utsey et. al., 2015). To impose political dominion, colonisers introduced "new forms of seeing the world" (Kgatla, 2018, p. 147) aimed at making the colonised see the world with white eyes and inculcating an inferiority complex (Fanon, 1962; Kgatla, 2018). As Fanon suggests, this inferiority complex not only pushed the colonised to feel their culture to be inferior and their nations to be unreal but also to feel "le caractère inorganisé et non-fini de sa propre structure biologique" (Fanon, 2002, p. 225) ("the unorganised and unfinished nature of their biological structure" (author's translation)).

European colonisers spread racial essentialism; the ideology according to which people are grouped into discrete racial categories based on the existence of biological features to distinguish human groups from one another and even to explain their cultural differences (Tawa, 2022; Zeng et al., 2022; Tadmor et al., 2013; Yalcinkaya et al., 2017). Racial essentialism is based on the idea that white people are biologically, and thus culturally, superior (McDonald, 2006). This, as Fanon (1962) suggests, triggered the desire of being white in the Black populations during colonisation and is still seen to this day in those whom Waberi calls the "enfants de la postcolonialité" (Waberi, 1998, p. 13) ("children of the postcolonialism" (author's translation). With the development of cosmesis, this desire is often translated into the practice of skin whitening, as in the case of Moki. Racial essentialism has generated in black people a discriminatory attitude towards themselves and all the other groups or individuals with the same physical characteristics.

Moki and his father, however, are not the only two characters who are discriminatory towards Congolese identity and culture. All their relatives and friends show similar attitudes, as exemplified by their veneration of Moki for having succeeded so well in adapting to white standards. As the narrator explains, what they appreciated most about Moki was his ability to speak "le français français", "*French French*".

> Nous admirons sa manière de parler. Il parlait un français français. Le fameux français de Guy de Maupassant, auquel faisait allusion son père. Il prétendait que nos langues étaient prédestinées à mal prononcer les mots. Nous ne parlions donc pas le vrais français (Mabanckou, 1998, pp. 62-63)

> We admired his speaking style. He spoke *French French*. The famous French of Guy de Maupassant, whom his father alluded to. He pretended that our tongues were predestined to mispronounce the words. Thus we did not speak real French. (Mabanckou, 1998/2013, pp. 40)

Moki's relatives and friends admire his French because of their belief that their own French is not the "real French" and that their tongue is not biologically fit to pronouncing French words correctly. The fact that Moki is admired by the whole neighbourhood for his French manners illustrates the scale of the spread of the sense of inferiority towards the French within Congolese society.

In *Black Bazar*, this issue of racism emerges with many characters. However, this article will mainly focuses on the discriminatory attitude of Paul du Grand Congo, one of Fessologue's friends. The novel begins with a conversation between him and Fessologue, during which Paul discourages Fessologue from writing a book. Not only does Paul tell his friend that Africa has an oral tradition, and so writing a book would not fit into the African cultural frame, but he also tries to make him believe that he has nothing to write about because he is black rather than a 'métis' like him: "Moi, par contre j'aurais des choses et des choses à raconter parce que je suis un métis, je suis plus clair que toi, c'est un avantage important" (Mabanckou, 2009, pos 156) ("I can instead tell loads of things because I am a métis, I am lighter than you, this is an important advantage" (author's translation)). Paul du Grand Congo does not believe that Fessologue can write a novel because of the colour of his skin, showing how the assimilation of colonial ideology can lead some Africans to oppress their own friends and community, preventing the emergence of a universal brotherhood, as advocated by thinkers, such as Fanon and Senghor. Fanon aimed to "rendre possible pour le Noir et le Blanc une saine rencontre" (Fanon, 1962, p. 64) ("make a healthy encounter for the Black and the White possible" (author's translation)). For the Martinican author, the mission is that of creating a harmony between the different communities around the world regardless of cultural and physical differences, something that may be achieved only if people could overcome prejudices towards other people and cultures. A similar project was promoted by Senghor whose poetry is a call for a human brotherhood (Lambert, 2009). Senghor advocated for a world where all people can live in peace and harmony. As Edward. A. Jones (1964) writes, "chante l'Afrique du passé, avec ses souffrances et ses aspirations, et l'Afrique de l'avenir, dans une nouvelle société de fraternité universelle qu'il souhaite et qu'il annonce" (p. 122) ("Senghor sings Africa's past, with its old traditions, Africa's present, with its suffering and its aspiration, and Africa's future, in a society based on a universal brotherhood that he hopes for and proclaims" (author's translation)).

A Call to Deconstruct the Concept of Race

Although characters like Moki and Paul du Grand Congo serve to discuss and denounce the psychological legacies of colonisation, they also serve as instruments to express the urge to deconstruct the concept of race. The concept of race is a social construct invented by Europeans to justify colonisation. The dichotomy between black and white groups did not exist before colonisation. The fact that the concept of race is a social construct has been demonstrated not only by sociologists and anthropologists but also by geneticists whose research has proved that "no consistent patterns of genes across the human genome exist to distinguish one race from another" (Human Genome Project in Martusewicz 209). There is only one *race*: the human *race* (Hedican, 2016). Moki's and Paul du Grand Congo's dysfunctional behaviour towards themselves and other African people reveal how their internalised racism towards the black community reinforces racialised politics and divides communities around the world. Through the experience of their characters, both *Bleu Blanc Rouge* and *Black Bazar* express the need for a different world. The underlying message of each novel is that there is a need to overcome race and borders and to found a new transnational society based on equality and reciprocal respect, recognition, and support.

In this light, Fessologue can be seen as a hero. Contrary to the other characters in the book, or those in *Bleu Blanc Rouge*, Fessologue shows no prejudice towards the black population, nor does he feel inferior to the white, as testified by his relationship with Sarah. He is a cosmopolitan and transnational citizen of the world, a man who has deconstructed racial essentialism and is able to see people for what they really are, regardless of their physical features, geographical origins, or cultural backgrounds, proving that a more respectful and equalitarian society is possible.

Conclusions

As has emerged from the analysis of *Bleu Blanc Rouge* and *Black Bazar* in this article, both novels use the transnational experience of their characters, who are shaped by interactions and movements across national borders, between the Republic of the Congo and Europe, to articulate a criticism of French, or more generally European, policies on matters of migration. Massala's experience in *Bleu Blanc Rouge* and the Black Paris depicted in *Black Bazar* reveal and denounce the integration difficulties that migrants face in France, as in other European countries. Not only it is hard to obtain the documents to enter and stay in European countries, but the urban development of European capitals, as exemplified by Paris in the two novels, does not promote the integration of migrant communities. Black and white people generally tend to live in separate areas, due to the reproduction of urban structures similar to the ones found in colonial cities which, as Fanon explains, are compartmentalised.

Bleu Blanc Rouge and *Black Bazar* also denounce the psychological effects of colonisation on the generations born after independence. During colonisation, colonisers inculcated an inferiority complex in the colonised, inciting them to reject their own culture in favour of white culture and leading them to develop a form of disregard towards their own bodies. In *Bleu Blanc Rouge*, this is seen, for example, in Moki who whitens his skin or in his family and friends who believe that they do not speak 'real French'. In *Black Bazar*, it is seen, for example, in Paul du Grand Congo who is discriminatory towards Fessologue. Paul du Grand Congo discourages Fessologue from writing a novel on the basis of his skin colour. For him, Fessologue would not have anything interesting to write about because he is darker than him.

The behaviour of these characters serves Mabanckou to call for the deconstruction of the concept of race, invented during colonisation to justify the violent politics of European countries, which is the very cause of black people's internalised racism. Through their discriminatory attitudes, these characters reveal the violence and irrationality of internalised racism, which leads the reader to reflect on its social impact. Self-discrimination causes a division that prevents the emergence of a universal brotherhood. The underlying message of each novel is to express the need to construct a new society free from any kind of prejudice and division.

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