

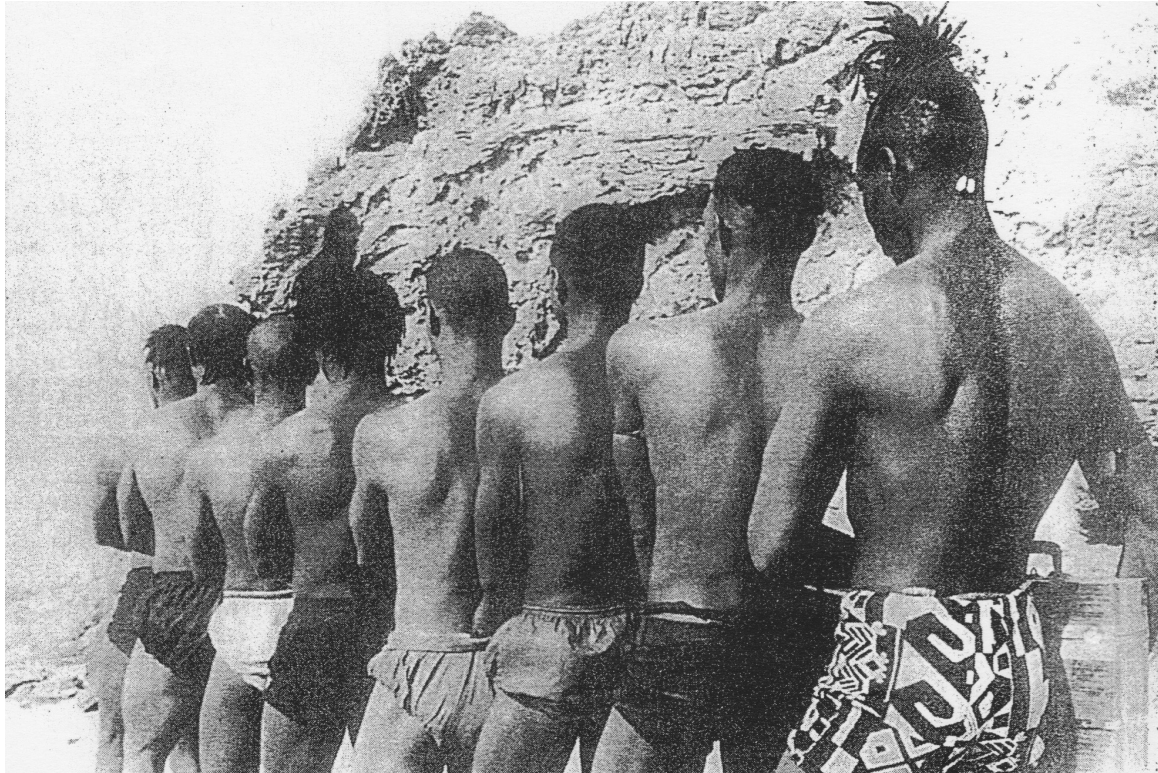
“Back to Africa”: Ethnocentrism and Colonialism in Montreal’s Festival *International de Nouvelle Danse*

Melissa Templeton

Montreal’s modern dance community owes much to *Festival International de Nouvelle Danse* (FIND) for bringing global attention to its artists. From 1982 to 2003, the biennial festival attracted dance enthusiasts from around the world, giving exposure to the city’s thriving modern dance scene. The festival launched the international careers of Montreal choreographers Édouard Lock, Marie Chouinard, and Ginette Laurin while bringing to Montreal Pina Bausch, William Forsythe, Merce Cunningham, and Trisha Brown (Normand 2003, n.p.). The festival also brought in large crowds; in approximately 350 performances over nearly twenty years, FIND drew 300,000 people to Montreal theatres (Martin 2013, n.p.). Chantal Pontbriand, Diane Boucher, and Dena Davida, the festival’s founders and organizers, carefully curated each iteration of FIND looking for upcoming trends in modern dance¹ and advocated Montreal as an international hotspot for dance artists.

While FIND promoted modern dance, whether homegrown or from abroad, the festival was often criticized for being Eurocentric, privileging European artists and aesthetics as a cultural zenith (Albright 1997; Citron 1999; Crab 1999; Howe-Beck 1999a). Ironically, the height of this Eurocentrism is most visible in the 1999 iteration of the festival: *Afrique: Aller/Retour* (in English the festival was titled *Africa: In & Out*).² The focus of the festival was ostensibly the African continent, but in an interview with Diane Boucher, she explained that they noticed Africa specifically because they saw several European choreographers (Susanne Linke, Mathilde Monnier, and Clara Andermatt) working with African dancers and believed “Africa” would be the next big trend in contemporary dance. Her interest in Africa seemed to privilege a European view of Africa, an account that resonates with artistic director Chantal Pontbriand’s claim that she became fascinated with Africa while reflecting on its proximity to Portugal (Boutin 1999). The organizers’ initial attraction to Africa as a theme for the festival was less about those artists working in Africa, and more about the continent’s relationship to Europe, which, though underacknowledged by the organizers, was for centuries defined as a relationship between colonizer and colonized.

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Publicity Poster for *FIND Afrique: Aller/Retour*. Image of Compagnie Jant Bi in Susanne Linke's *Le Coq est mort*. *Le Devoir*, September 25 & 26, 1999, B2. Photo by Pap Ba.

The framing of Africa through this European perspective, as well as the implicit power dynamics that it generates, emerge in subtle ways in the festival's imagery. In one of its most prominent promotional images, eight men stand, one behind the other, with their bare backs to the viewer. Their deep-brown skin glistens in the sun while they stare at a barren landscape. Brightly coloured shorts call attention to the men's buttocks, and their hidden faces add an element of intrigue to the scene. Barely visible in the bottom right corner of the frame is a briefcase—the one element in this image that unsettles the otherwise hackneyed scene. The photo was used to publicize German choreographer Susanne Linke's work *Le coq est mort* with the Senegalese group Compagnie Jant Bi, then still a very young company. *FIND* advertised *Le coq est mort* as a highlight of the festival, but this photo seems inconsistent with the work itself. *Le coq est mort* features its all-male cast in suits with briefcases, who admittedly perform bare-chested by the end of the performance, but do not ever appear in the small shorts seen in the photo. The briefcase, which is a central prop in the work, is hardly visible, and the photo seems to rehearse colonialist imagery of an uncivilized Africa (metaphorically through its racialized imagery but also more literally through its rocky, desert backdrop). This image from *Afrique: Aller/Retour* articulates the exoticism, colonialist fantasy, and facelessness with which Africa was often framed over the course of the festival.

Though many choreographers from Africa came to present at *Afrique: Aller/Retour*, it was European choreographers working with African dancers who were featured most prominently in the festival's promotional material. This exchange between Europe and Africa mimicked colonialist exchanges that, as Brenda Dixon Gottschild would argue, unfairly assume "African visual arts, music, and dance are raw materials that are improved upon and elevated when they are appropriated and finessed by European artists" (1996, 41). It may seem odd that this relationship between Europe and

Africa would haunt a Quebec dance festival decades after so many African liberation movements took place, yet it highlights the pervasive psychological impression that colonialism imprints upon its agents, subjects, and witnesses. Frantz Fanon speaks of this effect in his writing on colonialism and mental disorders: “Imperialism . . . sows seeds of decay here and there that must be mercilessly rooted out from our lands and from our minds” (181). Echoing the sentiment of Fanon as well as many of the reviewers writing about *Afrique: Aller/Retour*, it is in this vein that I suggest FIND’s presentation of Africa can be understood as colonialist—a way of framing Africa, whether consciously or not, through imagery and discourses with roots in European colonialism. In particular, the festival’s colonialist lens tends to posit Africa in essentialist terms, to imagine Africa steeped in the past, and to see Africa as though it were in need of tutelage/civilizing. This lens also sees Europe as a height of modernity, a creator of universalisms, and a noble civilizer. *Afrique: Aller/Retour* often depicted the African continent as a backward space—one not as advanced as Europe.

The Eurocentrism of *Afrique: Aller/Retour* is not unique; ballet and modern dance, genres largely associated with European and Euro-American culture, are often privileged in the global arts scene. Debates about ethnocentrism—the process of judging the culture of another based on one’s own cultural values and often believing one’s own to be superior—have shaped dance scholarship since at least 1970 when Joann Kealiinohomoku wrote her now oft-cited essay “An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance.” In it, Kealiinohomoku offers a description of ballet, a dance form with roots in the European courts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in a manner that highlights ballet’s peculiarity while echoing the way anthropologists have traditionally approached so-called ethnic dance. This shift in the way ballet was framed, like a parallax, allowed Kealiinohomoku to examine ballet from a new perspective and challenge its use as a touchstone for evaluating all dance forms. Despite Kealiinohomoku’s intervention, fifty years later, the pervasiveness of ethnocentrism, in particular one that recognizes dances and dance aesthetics of European and Euro-American heritage, continues to shape the way dance is presented in much of Europe and North America. Scholars like Gottschild (1996), for example, have demonstrated that concert dance forms like ballet and modern dance have borrowed heavily from African diaspora dance practices yet these influences have been masked to preserve the integrity of an imagined European superiority.

Gotschild’s research also highlights the cultural interconnections between Africanist and Europeanist art—taking for example American minstrel traditions, postmodern dance, and even ballet choreographer George Balanchine’s interest in jazz highlights the hybridity of dance traditions. Similarly, the exchanges between Africa and Europe that take place at the *Afrique: Aller/Retour* festival speak to these notions of hybridity, potentially undermining the very binaries the festival sets up: Europe/Africa; Contemporary/Traditional. However, this exchange also takes place asymmetrically; in these exchanges, a European choreographer tends to be positioned as the creator and authority. How can these uneven and problematic power dynamics be accounted for in discussions of hybridity? Authors like Gayatri Spivak (1987) have cautiously promoted the idea of strategic essentialism, a tactic used by the subaltern to intervene in Western historiography. She also warns that essentialism still carries with it the dangers of overlooking some of the nuanced differences and power dynamics within such identities (Danius, Jonsson, and Spivak 1993). While this essay often utilizes the distinction between “Africa” and “Europe,” which is admittedly a problematic binary set up by the festival, it is done so strategically in order to analyze these colonialist power dynamics. It should be noted that Africa and Europe are complex continents,

rather than singular monoliths, and to remember that their overlapping histories reveal more nuances than are present in the festival's binaries.

While FIND often advertised *Afrique: Aller/Retour* in ways that looked at Africa ethnocentrically, privileging European over African dance, many of the artists and spectators in the Montreal audiences challenged such framings. During and after the festival, it was the work choreographed by African dance artists that received the most praise from the press, as well as audiences more generally. Despite FIND's privileging of Europe, artists from Africa were beloved by audiences and won first and second place in the Prix du Publique. In addition, both the French and English media in Canada were critical of the festival's colonialist framing. The festival's ethnocentrism did not go unchallenged. What is the significance of this example of ethnocentrism in Quebec—a province whose layers of colonialism have for centuries complicated the identities of First Nations, Inuit, Québécois, Canadian, and Immigrant identities? How does a festival like *Afrique: Aller/Retour* further disrupt or deny historical and contemporary colonialism?³ And how is the imagery of Europe/Africa in *Afrique: Aller/Retour* both integral to Quebec culture and also undermined by Quebec's own socioeconomic, political, and cultural landscapes?

The complexity of this festival mirrors, in part, the complexity of Quebec's sociopolitical situation, then and now, as it relates to cultural belonging. In particular, Quebec has struggled since its Quiet Revolution to find a way to voice the plight of French Canada within an English-dominated country while negotiating that voice in a way that acknowledges Quebec's increasingly diverse demographics. Quebec has in some instances looked to Africa and the colonization movements taking place there to theorize its own situation. In other instances, Quebec has looked to Europe, France in particular, for cultural alliances, yet this relationship potentially alienates those with a difficult relationship to Europe, especially those who were or continue to be under colonial rule (as is the case of much of Africa). This paper considers how these political dynamics emerge in the context of FIND's 1999 *Afrique: Aller/Retour*. I also examine how, despite the way the festival unabashedly frames Africa from an ethnocentric perspective that privileges Europe, many of the artists, audience members, and critics present at *Afrique: Aller/Retour* demonstrate a resistance to this colonizing framework. In looking at the archival material available from the event, consulting people involved in its production, reassessing its footage, and reading reviews of the event, it appears that while some elements of *Afrique: Aller/Retour* epitomized a colonialist lens, many on the stage and in the Montreal audience rejected this lens in favour of a more complex image of Africa as contemporary and multiple. In the sections that follow, I discuss Quebec's political history focusing particularly on Quebec sovereignty and the province's relationship to Europe. I then outline how *Afrique: Aller/Retour* presented "Africa" through the eyes of European choreographers and discuss how this framing creates a colonialist gaze that aligns with nationalist appeals to European culture in Quebec. Embedded within the festival, however, is a challenge to such perspectives; the varied works by African dancers and choreographers invited to this festival presented a plethora of viewpoints and perspectives that complicate the festival's oversimplified framing. This glance back at FIND's *Afrique: Aller/Retour* highlights the tensions surrounding ethnocentrism that continue to inform current debates about cultural identity and belonging in Quebec.⁴

Strategic Nation Building: Looking to Europe

Afrique: Aller/Retour comes just four short years after Quebec's last sovereignty referendum. The narrow margin of the results (49.42% voting to leave Canada, 50.58% voting to stay) relieved

federalists while disappointing separatists. Apparently looking for a scapegoat, Jacques Parizeau, leader of the *Parti Québécois* and premier at the time of the vote, infamously blamed “argent et des votes ethniques” (money and ethnic votes) in his concession speech and resigned the next day. Some have dismissed his comments as unintentional words uttered in a moment of devastation (Woods 2015), but this is not the only instance where Quebec sovereignty has been tied to xenophobia and ethnic nationalism.⁵ Parizeau’s comments echo similar gaffes made by other separatist leaders⁶ and foreshadow the reasonable accommodation debates in Quebec (2007) and the passing of Bill 62 in October 2017.⁷ But while ethnocentrism often fuels these debates (in part due to the difficulty of defining “Québécois” as a distinct people deserving of their own country), many sovereigntists and federalists alike challenge this rhetoric and the xenophobia and racism it often potentially inflames (Bouchard and Taylor 2008). It is important to note that while Quebec sovereignty sometimes resembles ethnic nationalism, there are sovereigntists who do not rely on these strategies to promote their cause.

Sovereignty debates are rooted in a history of English Canada’s mistreatment of French Canada. Since the battle on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 (where Great Britain seized control of what was then New France) until at least the 1960s (when Quebec’s Quiet Revolution began to take shape), French speakers have been marginalized by Canada’s English-speaking majority.⁸ Outnumbered by English Canada and often holding less land and wealth, French Canada had comparatively little sway for centuries in political and economic matters in the country. During the Quiet Revolution, a period marked by the gradual urbanization, industrialization, and secularization of Quebec, an emerging French middle class voiced their concerns and desire for better political representation. A sovereigntist movement, one inspired by decolonization efforts taking place on the African continent and other places of colonialist devastation, took shape in the 1960s. Although the movement was relatively small at that time, with an approval rating between 8 and 11 percent, by the time of the 1995 referendum, sovereigntist approval was hovering around 50 percent (McRoberts 1997, 46). Seeking to liberate Quebec from Canada and give French Canada a right to self-govern, the sovereigntist movement has relied on models of nationalism that preceded it—models that imagine a nation as a community that shares a history, language, and culture (Anderson 1983). The history, language, and culture that has typically bonded Quebec’s sovereigntist movement is that of the colonists who established New France. But while this image of founding French colonists has carried much weight in political debates, it is an image that does not adequately represent the complex demographics of Quebec that include a growing immigrant population, nor does it adequately acknowledge First Nations and Inuit groups who struggle with their own anticolonial battles.

A relationship between France and Quebec began to flourish in the 1950s,⁹ in part thanks to the efforts of Georges-Émile Lapalme, leader of the Quebec Liberal party from 1950 to 1958. Lapalme believed Quebec could look to France as a model for its own modernization. He sought to promote the culture of France, especially its “high art,” in order to ensure that French (rather than English) would continue to be used as Quebec shifted from a religious and rural to a secular and modern society (Handler 1984, 100–101). Shortly after France’s President Charles De Gaulle established the Ministère des Affaires Culturelles in 1959, Lapalme made a similar suggestion, and in 1961, the Jean Lesage Liberal government created Quebec’s Ministère des Affaires Culturelles (Handler 1984, 101). With the Quiet Revolution and what is typically described as the gradual modernization of Quebec, France developed into an important cultural ally for the province. France eventually became a symbol of Quebec’s sovereigntist movement—a reminder (or perhaps fantasy) of the power French colonists once had in New France and a signal of their current place within Canada, a part of the

British Commonwealth. France's symbolic significance for Quebec nationalism crystallized in 1967, the year of Canada's centennial, when de Gaulle made a passionate speech to a crowd in Montreal where he famously declared "Vive le Québec Libre" (Relations France-Québec 2011). This moment was a turning point in Quebec-France relations, as it offered external validation to the vision of a sovereign Quebec nation.

Discussion of Quebec's "modernization" has multiple layers. In part, it implies a European temporality that situates Europe in the present and those who are "modernizing" in the process of catching up; Quebec could secure its position as a modern agent by emulating the advancements of France. "Modernizing" also refers to Quebec's political economy—there was a significant shift in the latter half of the twentieth century that saw Quebec's French population transition from an agrarian and religious population to an increasingly urban, industrial, and secular one. However, Quebec's project of modernizing also took the shape of nation-building (the "nation" being a by-product of European modernity) and offering a historical and cultural dimension to Quebec's politics and implicitly promoting its distinct governance. The idea of the self-governing nation-state, which has been central to European political philosophy with roots in the Enlightenment, became a globally adopted paradigm for pushing back against European colonization. But as scholars like Paul Gilroy (1993) have argued, "nation" is a problematic category (to which he offers the Black Atlantic as a challenge) that often relies on ethnic absolutism. Such nation-building strategies often use rhetoric that duplicates that of the racist right, especially in arguing for ethnic purity (Gilroy 1993, 7). In this sense, while the creation of cultural institutions and policies in Quebec that mirror those found in France may in part lend itself to supporting Quebec culture in general, this connection to France also potentially slides into those mythologies of Quebec that imagine "Québécois" as an identity tied ethnically and ancestrally to France as well.

While a relationship with France was developing alongside Quebec's modernization, paradoxically, separatist discourses in the 1960s and 1970s also often connected Quebec's nationalist awakening with anticolonialist movements taking place around the world, especially in Africa. Separatist writers often borrowed from the writings of theorists like Frantz Fanon, poets like Aimé Césaire, and leaders of the Black Power movement (Austin 2013). Even the separatist terrorist organization Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) borrowed its name from Algeria's Front de Libération Nationale (Bothwell 2006, 447). Many scholars have argued that this interest in "blackness" was a way to highlight the oppression that French-Canadians experienced as a result of British colonization, but such comparisons fail to account for the experiences of racism and colonialism experienced by First Nations and Inuit groups, as well as Quebec's own black population (Austin 2013; Dorsinville 1974; Makropoulos 2004; Scott 2015). In recent years, sovereigntist strategies increasingly identify a connection between Quebec and France, though there are still instances where Quebecers problematically use "blackness" to articulate their sense of oppression.¹⁰ What makes *Afrique: Aller/Retour* so fascinating is that in this dance festival, these identities collide; while enticing audiences with oversimplified imagery depicting blackness, oppression, and colonized subjects, the festival simultaneously privileges European art and the culture of the colonizer.

It should be noted that ethnocentrism in Quebec was exacerbated by Canada's multicultural policy. "It was no coincidence," writes Canadian scholar Linda Hutcheon, "that national multicultural policies were introduced at the same time that Quebec was developing its own discourses of decolonization, derived from francophone theorists such as Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon. For some, these policies still function as implicit barriers to the recognition of both *québécois* demands for independence and aboriginal peoples' land claims and desires for self-government" (1998, 29). In

1971, among heated debates about Quebec's place in Canada, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau claimed that rather than "bicultural," Canada was a "multicultural" society. Though superficially this declaration might seem like a way to acknowledge multiplicity within Canada, as historian Kenneth McRoberts explains, it ultimately became a way for Trudeau to use critiques of minority ethnic groups in Canada to undermine an emerging Quebec nationalism (1997, 120). Trudeau's declaration diminished French Canada's hardships to cultural differences while casting a blind eye on the complicated histories that have advantaged British-Canadians in the country.

Martin Bruner (1997) similarly argues that multiculturalism was initially conceived as a way to appease/subvert the separatist movement in Quebec (47) and that as a result, many sovereigntists initially adopted xenophobic strategies in response to English-Canada's multiculturalism and its assimilative power over Quebec (49). Multiculturalism has been embraced by English-Canadian nationalism as a way to mask its dominant position in the Canadian polity, as well as to claim authority on national matters over French-Canadian nationalism. The association of English Canada with multiculturalism¹¹ and French Canada with "ethnic exclusion" has helped English-Canadian nationalism (as slippery as it is) to gain legitimacy while continuing to repress Quebec nationalism as inherently flawed. This tension, however, is largely due to Quebec's struggle to define itself in nationalist terms; Canada's "multicultural" stance is so strong in its assimilative powers that it has become difficult for Quebec to build cultural borders. Quebec therefore finds itself continually grappling with white Anglophone hegemonic forces. Confronting its own issues of cultural exclusion, the Quebec government has developed a model for cultural inclusion called "interculturalism" that seeks to accommodate and integrate cultural minorities but privileges the French language in order to help with its linguistic preservation in a predominantly English country. This investment in intercultural approaches to Quebec culture, though often carrying its own baggage, also potentially offers a space to critique ethnocentrism.

FIND's *Afrique: Aller/Retour* offers some insight into these racial dynamics. In the wake of a defeated sovereigntist vote, a revival of ties to Europe, a developing policy of interculturalism, and a growing critique of Québécois identity from within the province, *Afrique: Aller/Retour* highlights the tensions between Eurocentric cultural productions in Montreal and a community looking to uproot such practices. Despite the festival's framing, whereby Africa becomes an exotic other steeped in the past and in need of civilization, with so many dancers and choreographers from Africa representing themselves, and with an audience increasingly sensitive to its own variegated community, a more nuanced understanding of the continent emerged alongside a colonialist one.

"L'Afrique des Européens"

Et puis il y eut l'Afrique des Européens. Autant de le dire tout de suite: j'ai détesté. Parler de récupération culturelle dans ce cas, c'est rester poli. (And then there was the Africa of the Europeans. To be brief, I hated it. To speak of cultural appropriation in this case is to be polite.)¹²

François Dufort, "Déjà un Au Revoir"

So much about the way this festival was presented reveals, both implicitly and explicitly, how Quebec came to see Africa through the eyes of a European colonizer. I've suggested that this perspective takes root in Quebec's evolving ties to France and the province's need to assert its cultural distinctiveness. In this section, I consider this colonialist lens by examining how *Afrique:*

Aller/Retour often depicts Europe and Africa as temporal opposites: Europe a sign of modernity and the contemporary moment, and Africa steeped in the traditions of the past. The festival also potentially essentializes African culture, implicitly and explicitly, in an apparent attempt to define Africa rather than allow Africa to speak for itself (though the many African choreographers at the festival certainly challenged such efforts). Finally, the festival often posited art coming out of Europe as the zenith of culture and something African dancers should strive to replicate. While some in the media exacerbate this colonialist framing, many others, like Dufort in the above quotation, challenge its validity.

A theme that continually emerged in the promotional material, press coverage, and even some of the choreography from Europe, was the juxtaposition of “tradition” and “modernity.” Stéphanie Brody and Frédérique Doyon of *La Presse* write: “Aller/retour du balancier entre chorégraphe occidentaux et africains qui s’influence mutuellement, aller-retour aussi entre modernité et tradition” (1999, B5; The festival must balance Western and African choreographers, who mutually inform each other, and also find a balance between modernity and tradition). The parallel structure of this sentence equates the West with modernity and Africa with tradition. Not only does “hybridity” become a theme that allows Europe to continue to be central even when the focus of the festival is Africa, but the cultural exchanges between Europe and Africa are frequently described as the meeting of modernity and tradition. This kind of dichotomy implies that an African present represents a traditional past while Europe becomes a symbol for a modern future. This temporal dichotomy mirrors festival vice president Diane Boucher’s vision for the *Afrique: Aller/Retour*. Boucher went to Africa to check out the scene and was an adjudicator for the dance festival *Rencontre chorégraphique de l’Afrique*, but she was not excited by the work she saw, as for her, it reflected “traditional” more than “contemporary” dance. She did, however, find Salia ni Seydou, a company from Burkina Faso who had worked previously with France’s Mathilde Monnier. Boucher selected Salia ni Seydou because she felt that they had “deeply personal movements, they had something to say, and what they had to say was profoundly rooted in African traditions [and] an essential African quality” (2011, my translation). Boucher explained to me that Africa was a continent that had strong dance traditions. She believed that traditional art should inform contemporary art but, with the exception of Salia ni Seydou, Boucher classified most of the work that she saw while in Africa as “traditional,” not “contemporary.”

However, while FIND’s organizers may have thought the significance of African dance lay predominantly in its potential to inspire contemporary European choreographers, one of said European choreographers, Mathilde Monnier, predicted that Western eyes were not yet ready to judge the aesthetic values of African dance. Not only was she conscious of the fact that the Western gaze is still full of prejudice when watching African dance, but she was also hesitant to describe her work as interested in hybridity. In relaying her interview with Monnier, Julie Bouchard writes, “*Pour Antigone* n’est pas une danse métisée où danseurs africains et danseurs contemporains se laisseraient influencer l’un par l’autre [. . . c’est] une rencontre entre deux cultures qui, chacune conservent ses propres références s’entrechoquent en un même lieu” (1999, n.p.; *Pour Antigone* is not a hybrid dance where African and Contemporary dancers are left to influence each other [. . . it is] an encounter between two cultures who each maintain their references but collide in one place). While Monnier’s classification of her dancers as “African” and “Contemporary” implicitly demonstrates an assumption that European modern dance is universal and more in the present than its “African” counterpart, she is also conscious of the potential dangers of this type of encounter. Fearing that her choreographic vocabulary might assimilate rather than showcase the talents of her dancers (five from Europe, five from Africa), Monnier attempted to bring them together in a way that allowed

them to collaborate while remaining distinct, although the extent to which this collaboration was successful is debatable.

Monnier's *Pour Antigone* (1993) brought together dancers from her France-based company with dancers from Burkina Faso. The set is minimalist, with aluminum panels adorning the outskirts of the stage while the dancers, dressed in simple dark clothing, offer rhythmic exchanges as they use the myth of Antigone to explore themes of injustice, the abuse of power, and freedom (Sanou 2008, 80). "From the Judeo-Christian perspective," the program reads,

Africa is frequently seen as another world, as an inhuman space of famine and poverty known only for its safaris and bare-chested dancing women. While clichés may be rooted in reality, they prevent us from seeing further, seeing the complex matrix of folklore and ritual, where dance is a full-fledged art. Mathilde Monnier delves deep into this zone, not with a mixture of African and contemporary techniques, but through human encounters that respect the deep-rooted identity of the other. (Monnier 1999, 2)

However, Monnier's attempt to showcase the talents of both the African and European dancers she worked with seems to have been muddied in the choreographic process. Instead of reading a critique of hybridity, critics saw Monnier's work as segregating these two cultures. Jo Leslie writes: "Monnier, who received the most advance publicity and opened the festival, did little more than display the African dancers in juxtaposition to her frosty French counterparts leaving many of us dazed and confused, if not outright angry. No real meeting took place and I've never seen Africans look so shut down (meeting Western standards?)" (1999, n.p.)

Monnier's attempt to create a "cultural collision" was riddled with problematic assumptions about her own relationship to African dancers. Her interest in Africa, as Julie Bouchard explains, was in "returning to a pure, primitive dance" (1999, n.p., my translation), which seems to lack the integrity she in other instances claimed it deserves. In an interview with Manon Richard of *La Presse*, Monnier explains: "J'étais tellement perdue à l'époque, je venais de terminer une pièce qui avait bien marché, mais j'avais l'impression d'être en train d'écrire un style de danse et je cherchais à savoir où je pourrais trouver la fracture. Plusieurs de formes de danse avaient déjà été exploités par les chorégraphes, la danse indienne, le buto, mais l'Afrique avait été peu explorée" (1999, D3; I was terribly lost at the time [of choreographing *Pour Antigone*]. I had just finished choreographing a piece that went well, but I had the impression that I was writing a style of dance and I wanted to know where I could find the break. Many forms of dance had already been exploited by choreographers, Indian dance, Butoh, but Africa had been little explored). There is a haunting parallel here between Monnier's artistic agenda and European colonialism, for Europe too decided to "explore" Africa. In this way, *Pour Antigone's* artistic approach echoes European colonialist projects.

While Monnier's exploits replicate colonialist ideologies, in these choreographed collaborations, there was a greater possibility for the African dancers involved in the project to use this interaction to their advantage and gain recognition for their work. In particular, two of Monnier's dancers, Salia Sanou and Seydou Boro,¹³ began their own dance company—and perhaps thanks in part to their exposure working with Mathilde Monnier, the company has gained significant international recognition. Due to their success abroad, Sanou and Boro began a training centre in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso dedicated to nurturing the work of African dance artists. Finally, in 2008, Salia Sanou published the book *Afrique Danse Contemporaine* funded by Centre National de la Danse in France,

which pays tribute to contemporary dancers and companies in Africa. In it he writes: “Je ne crie pas haut et fort que Mathilde Monnier a changé ma vie et fait de moi un artiste reconnu. Elle n’est d’ailleurs guère sensible aux honneurs. Cependant, j’aime répéter qu’elle ne m’a pas non plus trouvé allongé sous un baobab en Afrique. . . . Je dois reconnaître que l’avoir rencontrée m’a nourri” (82; I do not scream loud and clear that Mathilde Monnier changed my life and made me a recognized artist. She is not responsive to those types of honours anyway. However, I must repeat she did not find me lying under a baobab tree in African either . . . I must recognize that meeting her nourished me).

Similarly, Compagnie Jant Bi profited from their collaboration with Susanne Linke. Renowned African dancer, choreographer, and teacher, Germaine Acogny invited Susanne Linke—Tanztheater choreographer second perhaps only to Pina Bausch—to conduct a workshop with some promising dancers at l’École des Sables in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal. The success of the workshop led Acogny to found Compagnie Jant Bi in 1998. Acogny commissioned Linke to create their first major work, *Le coq est mort*, which had its North American debut at FIND. The company has since gone on to work with other international collaborators, including Kota Yamazaki (Japan) and Urban Bush Women (United States). However, while the company’s interaction with Linke set them up for successful international notoriety, the content of *Le coq est mort* was controversial.

Le coq est mort proposed to be a critique of colonialism; the dancers enter the sand-covered stage dressed in suits, carrying briefcases, and drinking champagne. But as the piece continues, the choreography gradually becomes more dishevelled and chaotic—in the final scene, the dancers gallop topless, grunt, and beat their chest. Linke may have overstepped her boundaries in attempting to create a work that, as François Dufort explains, “s’interroge sur la place de l’homme noir dans la société africaines” (1999a, 30; interrogates the place of the black man in African society). The creative process involved extensive collaboration between Linke, co-choreographer Avi Kaiser, and the company dancers, with Linke ultimately responsible for the structure of the work, while the dancers created the movement vocabulary through a series of improvisational activities designed by the choreographers.¹⁴ In other words, Linke was ultimately responsible for the construction of the work’s narrative such that the “place of the black man in African society,” though based on her experiences with the dancers, was ultimately based on her own vision of Africa. Linke makes claims about the nature of her African dancers; her essentialist words are fraught with condescension. *La Presse* quotes her as saying that Senegal has “l’énergie, l’innocence, et une précision dans la rythme absolument merveilleuse” (Doyon 1999b, n.p.; energy, *innocence*, and an absolutely marvellous precision in rhythm—my emphasis). And in the film *African Dance: Sand Drum and Shostakovich* (which was filmed at FIND that year), Linke explains that: “people in Africa . . . a certain kind of innocence that they have—innocent but not naïve, not at all, very intelligent, naturally intelligent and also clever, enormous sense of humor and they have an enormous sense for rhythm . . . that’s what they bring us through the dancing.” It is telling that Linke feels the need to continually qualify her use of the term “innocent,” perhaps realizing that the word is itself loaded and problematic. She essentializes Africans in her observations and pejoratively compliments her dancers’ intelligence. Her comments are framed in such a manner that her conclusion revolves around what the Africans might do for “us.” Although she doesn’t entirely express who “us” might be, implicitly, she seems to insinuate that Westerners may still profit from cultural encounters with Africa. Ironically, while Linke’s choreography attempts to critique colonialism, her artistic methods reconstruct a colonialist perspective.

Le coq est mort is a complex work that attempts to tackle many profound subjects but often lacks sensitivity to the racist interpretations it creates. Donald Hutera of *Dance Magazine* explains: “[Linke’s] scenario was clear: breaking out of rigid, conformist diplomacy, eight business-suited men indulge their war-mongering impulses before reverting back to nature. The piece mourned a guileless innocence Linke fears modern society has lost” (2000, 86). The themes of guilelessness and a return to nature might not be as offensive had they not been performed by African bodies, reviving stereotypes of a primitive Africa. Renée Richard, writing for *Le Point D’Outremont*, explains that as the piece progresses “la danse se ‘ritualise’; elle devient sauvage, vivante, et brute” (1999, n.p.; the performance ‘ritualizes’ itself: it becomes savage, lively, and rough). This production ends with the image of African dancers performing “the savage,” replicating colonialist tropes used to justify Europe’s power. The choreography thus becomes a tool for subliminal colonial discourse that positions Africa in stark contrast to the presumed intellectual and cultural superiority of Europe.

As Avi Kaiser, Linke’s co-choreographer, explains, the title “*Le coq est mort*” carries multiple symbolic resonances for the piece. It symbolized a literal desire to kill the village rooster who would wake them up at 5:30 every morning; it symbolized the “coq gaulois”—a symbol of France—and its death announced “la fin de l’impérialisme colonial au Sénégal” (the end of colonial imperialism in Senegal); it symbolized masculinity; and “enfin, il témoigne d’une réalité tout à fait concrète de la vie africaine: l’entourage animalistique, le quotidien vécu parmi chiens, poules, et chèvres” (and finally, it testifies to a concrete reality of African life: animalistic surroundings, the quotidian lived among dogs, chickens, and goats) (Doyon 1999b, n.p.). However, these reflections on life in Africa reinforce stereotypical notions of the continent—that it is poor and agrarian, wild and savage—rather than bringing nuance to these old understandings. While French colonial rule may have ended in Senegal, French imperialism continues to have an impact of Senegalese life. Scholars like Anne McClintock (1992) and Ella Shohat (1992) argue that the problem with the term “postcolonialism” is that it fails to recognize the continuity of first world hegemony after a colony’s formal independence. In this sense, suggesting that France is “dead” in Senegal ignores its continued influence over the country.¹⁵

Furthermore, Kaiser and Linke tend to over-romanticize what they view as the “animalistic” side of Africa. At the end of the performance at FIND, the eight black male dancers step into the light, making fleeting impressions with their feet on the sand covered stage. Wearing nothing but black slacks, the bare-chested dancers beat their hands against their torsos and scream while the sound of gunfire pierces the air. Jo Leslie writes: “*Le Coq est mort* was disturbing for all the wrong reasons. . . . I nearly had a seizure at the profundity of her naïveté: black men, bare chested, hopping about as gorillas?” (1999, n.p.). The controversy was powerful enough that when the company performed the work again at Jacob’s Pillow the following year, the “gorilla” movement was taken out (Compagnie Jant Bi 2000).

While “Africa” was the official theme of the festival, this was often accompanied by a secondary theme: hybridity. As Montreal dance critic Jo Leslie writes, sardonically: “Perhaps Africa was not intellectually interesting enough for FIND and so the second theme of hybrid was created as a convenient framing for the favored choreographers” (1999, n.p.). In fact, FIND sponsored a conference in conjunction with the festival and its theme was hybridity rather than African dance (Pontbriand 2001). This emphasis on cultural mixing became an interest during the African themed festival but not during any of the European themed festivals FIND previously held, perhaps suggesting that for the organizers, African dance is not strong enough to constitute a festival of its own. While the use of hybridity as a theme is suspect, in practice it becomes a kind of aporia, unwittingly challenging the binary that privileges Europe over Africa in the festival’s rhetoric.

Cultural theorist Tavia Nyong'o (2009) suggests that hybridity and the threat of miscegenation has the potential to undermine racial narratives and “unsettles collective and corporeal memory” (12–13). That Montreal audiences were so often critical of these contentious cultural collaborations seems to support this idea and accompanying this theme of hybridity came questions about colonialism, racism, and imperialism as focal points of the festival and in these collaborative encounters.

Despite Linke's overt depictions of Africa as primitive, and Linke and Monnier's essentialist claims, Boucher refutes the argument that their choreography is colonialist, saying that it's just beautiful work (2011). This privileging of European dance artists speaks to a cultural practice in Quebec that connects Quebec cultural production with the work being done in France and Europe more generally, often ignoring critiques coming from outside of Europe. However, as the above commentaries from the press highlight, audiences were resistant to these Eurocentric depictions and took a greater interest in the multiplicity that characterized “Africa” as depicted by African dance artists.

“La Contemporanéité Africaine est Multiple”

La contemporanéité africaine est multiple et elle n'a pas à se définir simplement comme fusion avec le monde occidental.

(African contemporaneity is multiple and does not have to be defined simply as a fusion with the West.)

Zab Mabougou, quoted in Julie Bouchard “Une Danse reliée aux pulsations memes de la terre”

While the previous, politically controversial versions of Africa dominated the main stages of FIND, contemporary African dance filled Montreal's smaller venues with a different vision. Crucially, rather than presenting an essentialist idea of Africa, the varied works coming from African choreographers highlighted how insufficient the word “Africa” is to capture the plurality of cultures represented there. The dancers and choreographers engaged with contemporary questions and reflected on subjective themes that undermined the condescending tone of the festival—a tone that sometimes positioned Africa as uncivilized, backwards, stuck in the past. Instead, their work explored themes not overtly related to a relationship to Europe (focusing instead on themes like African feminisms), developed symbolisms specific to African cultures, and challenged essentialist projects by questioning the ability ever to know the “other.”

It seems clear from the schedule of events at FIND that the European choreographers were expected to bring in the largest crowd—they received ideal performance times, large theatres in which to perform, and the ticket prices for their shows were substantial.¹⁶ On the other hand, most of the contemporary African dance companies were presented in small black box theatres. The performance by Montreal-based dancer Zab Mabougou's was scheduled to begin at 11 p.m. on a weekday, making it inconvenient for many spectators. Even the most popular contemporary African dance company of the festival, Salia nĩ Seydou, was presented in a medium-sized theatre. Furthermore, tickets to see the two Ivory Coast companies, TchéTché and Compagnie Sylvain Zablí, were free—they were quite literally being given away (Lachance 1999, 55). On the one hand, this was a fine way to bring in audiences to see the performance, but on the other, it implies that the

festival did not believe that the works by African choreographers would be strong enough to draw an audience.

And yet in spite of these issues, the African contemporary dance companies received the highest praise from festival-goers and critics alike. The Prix-du-public went to Salia ni Seydou, and second place went to South Africa's Vincent Mansoe, and critics consistently praised the work of Salia ni Seydou, Mansoe, and Tch  Tch   (Brody 1999; Doyon 1999a; Dufort 1999b; Howe-Beck 1999b; Leslie 1999; Kisselgoff 1999).

The presence of these companies, and the multiple voices speaking about African dance at the festival, whether in interviews with the media or presentations at the three-day conference, offered a significantly more complex vision of Africa. Local contemporary African choreographer Zab Maboungou explained to *Le Devoir*: “L’Afrique a droit   sa contemporan  t   comme n’importe quel autre continent qui est dans le monde d’aujourd’hui et en subit tous les mouvements, les contrecoups, les obsessions, les formes de dominations. . . . La contemporan  t   africaine est multiple et elle n’a pas   se d finir simplement comme fusion avec le monde occidental” (Bouchard 1999; Africa has a right to its own contemporaneity just like any other continent that is in the world today and sustains with it all the movements, aftershocks, obsessions and forms of domination. . . . African contemporaneity is multiple and does not have to be defined simply as a fusion with the West). For Maboungou, the very notion of “contemporary” is often thought to be associated with “the West,” and implicitly, Africa is seen as being “the past.” However, while tradition certainly plays an important part in African society, as it does in “the West,” to choreograph contemporary African dance should not necessarily mean that it must engage with Western dance ideals. And while many of the African dancers and choreographers present at the festival may have been informed by artists in Europe, Europe is not necessarily at the centre of African contemporary dance. Maboungou’s Pan-African description of dance on the continent resonates with Spivak’s description of strategic essentialism—describing “Africa” in general helps undermine Eurocentric assumptions that denigrate dancers coming from Africa. However, in other instances, Maboungou is acutely aware of the importance of seeing the variety and multiplicity that can hardly be contained within it; l’afrique est multiple, as she explains.

Unlike many of the other contemporary African dance performances at the festival, Maboungou’s *Incantation* (1995) avoids the use of European modern dance conventions, which, she explains, is in part for political reasons. A call from the stage begins *Incantation* and Maboungou, dressed in tan, energetically circles her hips and ribs while marching a complementary rhythm in her feet. Maboungou describes this piece as an exploration of agency, an “energy dance” where she “fully assumes the role of a perpetrator of a dance where time never ends” (Nyata-Nyata 2018, n.p.). *Incantation*, like much of Maboungou’s work, is characterized by silky, sinuous, and articulate movements, as she draws the audience into her highly introspective and captivating presence. Maboungou is not necessarily suggesting that her work is devoid of European influence (and she is of French and Congolese descent). However, as I’ve discussed elsewhere, her project has been to create a contemporary dance that uses an “African” vocabulary so that Africa may be seen as contemporary on its own terms (Templeton 2017, 47).

Although Salia ni Seydou uses the theme of “the other” as a starting point for *Fignito ou l’ il trou  * (1997), much in the way Mathilde Monnier does in *Pour Antigone*, the picture they paint of this subjective relationship is quite different than Monnier’s. The dancers perform solos in silence, execute a blindfolded duet that climaxes in a moment of contact, and offer a denouement depicting

one dancer slowly spilling sand over the other's head. "The stranger has large eyes to see nothing," the subheading in the program reads (Tangente 2012). The word *fignito* means blindness in Bambara, and the work reflects on issues of death, powerlessness, the passage of time—"our vulnerability, our otherness, our solitude"—but also encounters, friendship, and love (Tangente 2012). In the piece, the dancers continually move without facing or even acknowledging the other, and their inability to see creates a powerful dramatic effect that causes near misses and subtle ironies amidst the generally sombre tone of the work (Doyon 1999a). Curiously, while Monnier's work emphasized the possibility of bringing together two different cultures and believing that a single piece could speak to/for both of them, Salia ni Seydou presents a more complex image, suggesting that such endeavours may be worthwhile, but acknowledging the struggle and potential inability for such encounters to ever be successful.

Another important image found in the work of both the "European" and the "African" choreographers is sand, as seen in the work of Susane Linke and Salia ni Seydou. In the documentary *African Dance: Sand Drum and Shostakovich*, Linke explains that she was inspired to use sand to cover the stage in *Le coq est mort* because when they conducted the workshop in Sénégal, they did not have a studio to work in and so they worked outside in the sand. Her interest in sand seems rooted in its strangeness to her and, along these lines, the use of sand on the stage in *Le coq est mort* seemed to create more of a spectacle of the performance and sensationalize the experience of dancing in Africa. On the other hand, Salia ni Seydou incorporate sand in their piece in a very different way. Near the end of the work, Boro pours a gourd of sand over Sanou's head. In the same documentary, Boro explains the significance of the sand: "we come from the ground, and we will return to the ground." Salia ni Seydou incorporate sand in their work as a profound metaphor of the passage of time, while in Linke's work sand is quite literally a superficial "surface" that defines the dance.

Finally, the choreography of the all-female group TchéTché speaks to feminine experiences coming from Africa. TchéTché's founder and choreographer Béatrice Kombé Gnapa¹⁷ grew up with dance: her father was a dancer. She studied with several companies on the Ivory Coast, as well as internationally with Alphonse Tiérou and Zab Maboungou, and with Viola Farber. Kombé presented *Dimi*, which became her most famous piece, at FIND. "A hymn to feminine solidarity and a beacon of hope," reads the program, "*Dimi* is a celebration of reconciliation, enacted by dancers who make their bodies speak" (Tangente 2012). *Dimi*, which means "shock" or "pain" in Malinke, looked to portray a message of strength and hope to women. In moments of intimacy, the women would grasp shoulders in support; at other times, they displayed fierce power through agile and acrobatic movements. Anna Kisselgoff of the *New York Times* writes: "Ms. Kombé's opening solo, in silence, distills the astounding physical daring that the other dancers will pick up as they enter. She jumps stright [sic] up and lands in a split, cartwheels, erupts into barrel jumps or drops flat on her back" (1999, B5) TchéTché, which means eagle, testifies to women's ability to lead, create, and be heard on their own. Salia Sanou writes of Kombé: "Sa danse, très physique, tonique, était une forme de lutte pour libérer les jeunes filles de la pression familiale et patriarcale sur leurs choix de vie" (2008, 70; Their dancing, very physical and invigorating, was a form of struggle that allowed young women to find freedom from familial and patriarchal pressures on their choice of life). Though little has been written about this piece, in part due to the unfortunate passing of Kombé in 2007, her work has been heralded as an important intervention in contemporary African dance, highlighting women in Africa not as passive traditionalists but as vibrant agents participating in a turbulent political landscape. For all the problematic imagery and framing found in much of the *Afrique:*

Aller/Retour festival, that voices such as Kombé's emerge to undermine patriarchal, colonialist understandings of Africa offers some solace.

At the close of the festival, Chantal Pontbriand expressed great excitement about the energy of African dance and felt that it could potentially change contemporary dance in the new millennium. Further, she states, "Africa is very open to the world and asks to be included and to have exchanges" (Howe-Beck 1999c, B5). Her statement reveals on the one hand that African dancers made an impression on the city; on the other hand, though, her words reductively imply that Africa has not been a part of global culture until now. The sincerity of her statement is also debatable. Linde Howe-Beck of the *Gazette* explains that traditionally, FIND has re-invited the public's favourite performers to return to the festival the next year (1999c, B5). However, despite Salia nĩ Seydou winning the Prix du Publique, they returned the following year not on their own, but as part of Mathilde Monnier's company. Moreover, many critics raved about Vincent Mansoe's production, and François Dufort thought he would be invited to return the following year (1999b, 30), but Mansoe did not return either. In fact, FIND decided to abandon the idea of featuring a country (or an entire continent in 1999) and instead had as its 2001 theme "Le Grand Labo"—the big laboratory. The artists were all from Canada or Europe. Due to financial difficulties, 2003 was the final year of FIND.

"Back to Africa"

In examining *Afrique: Aller/Retour*, we see that FIND "looked back" to Africa, believing they would find traditions of the past and some primal image of dance. But what they found in looking back at Africa was that Africa looked back at them. Rather than a one-way perspective, many of the choreographers and dancers coming from Africa challenged the Eurocentric vision that plagued the festival before it.

While *Festival International de Nouvelle Danse* was a fundamentally important project for modern dance, it also carried with it a flaw that often haunts cultural production in Quebec: a vision of European culture as the highest model of art. In the case of *Afrique: Aller/Retour*, this resulted in a festival that ostensibly focused on Africa but ultimately privileged the work of European choreographers and often led to colonialist imaginings of Africa in essentialized terms as primitive, uncivilized, and back in time. This Eurocentrism mirrors a privileging of Europe that often accompanies nationalist rhetoric in Quebec—a strategy that on the one hand has been important for helping define Quebec as a nation that should potentially be separate from Canada, but has also alienated many Quebecers who do not identify with a European ancestry.

Looking back on this festival twenty years later, we might think of *Afrique: Aller/Retour* as a precursor for some of the current debates that still swirl around Montreal cultural productions, for example the protests and debates that emerged during Montreal's 2018 Jazz festival over Robert Lepage's *SLAV* (a work that appropriated slave songs and often featured white cast members depicting black slaves), or the white student strikers in 2012 who donned blackface to make a misguided point about oppression, or the ongoing struggle in Quebec to reconcile the principles of interculturalism and multiculturalism with policies like Bill 62 banning face coverings. Crucially however, just as many sovereigntists object to ethnocentric nationalism in definitions of Québécois culture, so too do Montreal audiences object to these insensitive displays of race, much as they did to FIND's colonialist framing of Africa. Audiences were receptive to Salia nĩ Seydou's anti-

essentialist choreographic perspectives that proposed the inability to understand and know the other, while welcoming more complex depictions of Africa as contemporary (Zab Maboungou) and contemplating African feminism (TchéTché). Reflecting upon *Festival International de Nouvelle Danse's Afrique: Aller/Retour* highlights how competing forces—ethnic nationalism promoting Eurocentrism and a critique offered by non-European voices—struggle to define Québécois culture. While many English headlines that contemplate cultural belonging in Quebec today often highlight xenophobia in Quebec in simplistic ways, depicting the province as uniformly racist, Montreal's receptiveness to African critiques of Eurocentrism suggests that while there is certainly xenophobia within Quebec, there is also resistance.

Notes

1. While the festival's founders often use the term "contemporary dance" here, I am using the term "modern dance" to emphasize the festival's connection to the modern dance tradition with roots in the European and Euro-American modernism (like Mary Wigman and Martha Graham). It should also be noted that both "modern" and "contemporary" are problematically used in this festival (and sometimes more generally in dance criticism) in opposition to the category "traditional." This binary has been used to unfairly pigeonhole African art in derogatory ways as less artistic and less relevant to the present moment.
2. "Aller/Retour" is a French term that literally means "go/return" but is an expression that would translate to English as a return ticket or roundtrip.
3. Julie Burelle (2019), for example, discusses the problematic ways "québécois de souche"—those assumed to have descended directly from French colonists—are often described as "colonized" when such phrasing distracts from Quebec's own history and its continued colonization of First Nations and Inuit lands.
4. Current debates about cultural belonging are most notoriously tied to the discussions surrounding reasonable accommodation that have shaped Quebec politics over the last decade. Debates about what accommodations should and should not be made for ethnic and religious minorities in the province came to a head in 2007 when exaggerated media reports prompted the Charest government to commission the Bouchard-Taylor report, again in 2013 when Premier Pauline Marois proposed the Charter of Quebec Values, and yet again when in 2016 Bill 62 was passed banning face coverings such as the burka when using public services.
5. Even McRoberts, who attempts to validate the French Canadian position, admits that ethnic nationalism occasionally informs the nationalist movement in Quebec (254–55).
6. For example, during the 1995 sovereignty campaign, Lucien Bouchard, leader of the Bloc Québécois party, made problematic racist and misogynistic comments about the need for French Canadian women to have more babies: "Do you think it makes sense that we have so few children in Quebec? We are one of the white races that has the least children [and] that does not make sense" (quoted in Bruner 1997, 51). Similarly, Yves Michaud (a prominent public figure and supporter of the Parti Québécois) made comments in 2000 about allophones being intolerant of the French majority (Maclure xii). Or consider in 2007 when ADQ and formal Quebec opposition leader André Boisclair commented to students in Trois-Rivieres about the surprising amount of students with "yeux bridés" (loosely translated as "slanted eyes") that he came across while studying in Boston (Robitaille 2007, n.p.).
7. For more on reasonable accommodation see Bouchard and Taylor's "Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation" (2008) and Steuter-Martin's "Bill 62" (2018).
8. Kenneth McRoberts's *Misconceiving Canada* offers a powerful historical account of Quebec from a sovereigntist perspective, acknowledging the many ways English-speaking Canada has marginalized or sought to assimilate French-speaking Canada. Some scholars, like Gérard Bouchard, argue that this marginalization continues today (Bouchard and Taylor 2008).

9. After the British took control of what was then New France in 1760, ties between French colonists and France were all but severed. While exchanges between the two regions continued, the relationship weakened as France became more secularized while the Catholic Church continued to have a powerful sway over French Canada well into the twentieth century (Relations France-Québec 2011).
10. There are still occasional instances of Quebecers drawing a link between their own experiences of oppression to those of black men and women, like, for example, the egregious use of blackface during the student protests of 2012. For more, see Anthony Morgan's powerful editorial "La grève et les minorités" (2012).
11. Furthermore, as Himani Bannerji argues in "Geography Lessons: On Being an Insider/Outsider to the Canadian Nation," multiculturalism has become a powerful symbol of English Canadian nationalism (2004, 291), and an effective way to promote tourism through things like festivals (295), but it "skims the surface" when it comes to addressing issues the white English majority finds threatening (296).
12. All translations are my own.
13. Sanou was training to be a police inspector and Boro was an actor (Sanou 2008, 91–93).
14. Linke and Kaiser discuss their choreographic process in the film *African Dance: Sand, Drum and Shostakovich* (2002), which documents many of the choreographers who performed in FIND's 1999 festival.
15. The extent to which France is "dead" in Senegal is further complicated by the fact that these artists collaborate in the colonizer's language, French.
16. Unfortunately, due to a strike at Places-des-Arts, the major centre for dance performances, the FIND organizers had to scramble just weeks before the festival to find new locations for all their performances, which led to decreased audience capacity and severe cuts to ticket sales.
17. Tragically, Kombé passed away in 2007 of kidney failure. She was thirty-five years old.

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