Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:SP 2015

Department:Romance Languages

Degree:PhD

Title:Rethinking French Identity Through Literature: the Case of Four 21st Century Novels.

Reading French newspapers or watching TV broadcasts in the mid-teens of the twenty-first century, it is hard to deny or to ignore that France is currently (or still) undergoing an identity crisis. This crisis is of course not exactly a new phenomenon; many would indeed argue that the malaise originates from the waves of immigration that followed the Second World War and the dismantling of the colonial empire, leading second-generation immigrants to demonstrate, sometimes violently, against the unjust social realities of France in the 1980's and 1990's. In this dissertation, I argue that immigration has become the scapegoat for an identity crisis that is, in fact, Franco-French. I analyze four novels – JMG Le Clézio's *Révolutions* (2003), Alexis Jenni's *L'Art français de la guerre* (2011), Azouz Begag's *Le Marteau pique-coeur* (2004), and Éliette Abécassis's *Sépharade* (2009) – that show that the current state of affairs stems from France's post-Revolutionary interpretation of the ideal of equality, rather than immigration alone. It is France's very notion of equality as sameness that prevents its citizens from adapting to the changes brought by the dissolution of the colonial empire. My postcolonial reading of these texts will reveal the complicated interaction between the individual and the forces that participate in the construction of individual and group identities.