

**Work and Labor in World
Languages, Literatures,
and Film**

Work and Labor in World Languages, Literatures, and Film

Selected Proceedings of the 24th Southeast
Conference on Languages, Literatures,
and Film

St. Petersburg, Florida. March 6-7, 2020

Edited by

Will Lehman, Margit Grieb, and
Yves-Antoine Clemmen



BrownWalker Press
Irvine & Boca Raton

*Work and Labor in World Languages, Literatures, and Film: Selected Proceedings of
the 24th Southeast Conference on Languages, Literatures, and Film*

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BrownWalker Press / Universal Publishers, Inc.
Irvine, California & Boca Raton, Florida • USA
www.BrownWalkerPress.com
2021

978-1-59942-621-1 (pbk.)

Cover photo by Ray Legans.
Cover design by Ivan Popov.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Southeast Conference on Languages, Literatures, and Film (24th : 2020 : Saint Petersburg, Fla.) | Lehman, Will, editor. | Grieb, Margit, 1966- editor. | Clemmen, Yves-Antoine, 1961- editor.

Title: Work and labor in world languages, literatures, and film : selected proceedings of the 24th Southeast Conference on Languages, Literatures, and Film, St. Petersburg, Florida, March 6-7, 2020 / edited by Will Lehman, Margit Grieb, Yves-Antoine Clemmen.

Description: Irvine : Brown Walker Press, 2021. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021007563 | ISBN 9781599426211 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Labor in literature--Congresses. | Labor in motion pictures--Congresses | Working class in literature--Congresses. | Working class in motion pictures--Congresses. | Second language acquisition--Congresses. | Language and languages--Study and teaching--Congresses.

Classification: LCC PN56.L22 S68 2020 | DDC 808.8/03553--dc23
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021007563>

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Preface

The following essays represent a selection of papers presented at the Southeast Conference on Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Film (SCFLLF) held on March 6th and 7th, 2020 on the St. Petersburg campus of the University of South Florida. The conference was supported by a generous grant from the University of South Florida and received administrative and organizational support from Stetson University and the Department of World Languages at the University of South Florida.

This conference, which is convened every two years since the 1980s, has been, since its inception, a venue for scholarly contributions that focus on non-English language area studies. At our 2020 conference, seventy-four national and international scholars presented their research on linguistics, literature, film, culture, and language pedagogy. The essays selected for inclusion in this volume all probe and comment on the ways the concepts of work and labor inform and are informed by world languages, literatures, film, and culture. We have organized these contributions into six sections, outlined below.

Part I: Working on Race and Gender

The work of curating places equal emphasis on transmission and conservation and on access to modes of knowledge. Inevitably interpretative and critical, curation conditions our relationship to the world, to institutions, to cultural codes. In her essay “French Slave Museum Curation as Public Scholarship: Reflecting on the Past, Realizing the Present, Envisaging the Future,” Ima Hicks argues that, as institutions of representation, museums play a role, however unintended, in the politics of recognition. In the French context, the search for political recognition and social justice by many African-Caribbean communities, theoretically, should have found synergy with the social inclusion policies and strategies of the French cultural sector. However, curatorial conceptualizations of the nature of “exhibition,” the need to balance competing community aspirations and the role of curatorial authorial voice, means that French slave museums become implicated in struggles for social justice and often create further unresolved tensions as they attempt to transmit, conserve, and mediate knowledge of the history of enslavement and the exploitation of Africa.

In their essay, “Women at Work: Alfonso Cuarón’s *Roma* through the Lens of Neorealism,” Antonio Melchor and Thomas DiSalvo analyze the

Academy Award-winning film by the well-known Mexican director. They develop the idea, an undeveloped commonplace of the film's initial critical reception, that Cuarón's film is influenced by Italian Neorealism. The authors identify a precursor to *Roma* in Vittorio De Sica's *Umberto D*, a film which, like *Roma*, includes the story of a maid whose job is jeopardized by an unplanned, out-of-wedlock pregnancy. The authors find that *Roma* does indeed belong in the Neorealist tradition that grows out of De Sica's work, not only in its focus on the working class and the poor, but in its special sensitivity to the challenges that economic pressures and patriarchy pose for the women in those groups, and to the difficulty women face finding solidarity and protection against those pressures.

Daniel Fonfría-Perera's essay "Masculinidades no dominantes en la serie *Mar de plástico* (2015-2016): Inmigrantes y proletarios" analyzes the representation of non-dominant types of masculinities, mainly embodied by immigrant temporary workers and local low paid workers in the Netflix's hit series, arguing that elements such as country of origin, race, and social class affect the construction of masculine identities, characterized by aggressiveness and the use of violence. Following Raewyn Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, he argues that masculine hegemony is built on the subordination of women and of other men who represent marginalized masculinities, helping consolidate and naturalize certain stereotypes traditionally associated with these groups.

In her essay "Dubbelbloed: Race and Identity in Contemporary Dutch-Surinamese Literature," Jenneke Oosterhoff examines the strong but underexposed link between current issues of racism and national identity and the role of the Dutch in colonialism and the slave trade. The Dutch, global traders of goods and labor force for centuries, faced an influx of immigrants looking for better education and economic prosperity after their former colonies became independent. Just like the "guest workers" before them and the political refugees after them, they came to stay and confronted Dutch society, which typically presents itself as tolerant and open minded, with its long and violent colonial past and its unwittingly racist attitude toward people of color. As more and more young Dutch-Surinamese writers explore their own bi-racial background and culture, they foster the very timely debate on post-colonial identity and immigration politics and what it means to be Dutch.

Grażyna Walczak, in her essay "La evolución de la imagen femenina en tres historias detectivescas de escritoras mexicanas," analyzes the literary image of women working in traditionally masculine roles as detectives. Her study, based on three stories written by Mexican women writers, María Elvira Bermúdez, Patricia Valladares and Laura Esquivel, reveals changes in the feminine image in literature and poses questions about gender roles in modern society.

Part II: Working in the Classroom: Language Pedagogy

Video games have only recently emerged as pedagogical tools and objects of research in second and foreign language learning. In their essay, Emily Johnson and Gergana Vitanova examine a relationship that has so far not been investigated adequately: the interaction between agency and gaming in language learning. Specifically, they focus on one suite of video games that was originally and specifically designed for second language learners, *EndLess LEarner (ELLE)*, posing the following questions: What benefits does *ELLE* provide to language learners? How can agency be enacted through games? What are the potential constraints? Although definitions of the concept of agency remain elusive, agency today entails the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act. Learning and teaching can be viewed as labor, including emotional labor. The essay explores how video games can mediate language learners' acts and offers implications for developers and teachers.

David Shook's essay "The Work at Hand: The Successful Integration of Foreign-Language Programs in a STEM-Oriented Academic Environment," argues that since many foreign-language programs are struggling to maintain the relevance of their current arts/humanities focus for their students' future professional plans, these programs need to look to establish reasonable relationships and collaborations with the science-, technology- and engineering-focused programs at their institutions, enabling their students to develop CVs that reflect their foreign-language interests and experiences coordinated with practical knowledge of, and experience in, the STEM fields. This coordination will ensure sustainability for foreign-language programs, increase the appeal of these new programs for future students and industry recruiters, and will support graduates destined for the global marketplace in the twenty-first century. Shook presents examples of such collaborations as models for other foreign-language programs as pathways for success.

In her essay "How Can Foreign Languages Become a Marketable Field of Study in Higher Education?" Taoues Hadour addresses several strategies to market language studies which could create a revenue stream for language departments and universities. With the high cost of higher education in the US, many students do not consider foreign languages as a marketable field of study. In response, many language departments have introduced more courses with professional content. Hadour discusses strategies in teaching these courses, as well as other approaches to attract more students, such as awarding professional certificates and increasing

interdisciplinary work in order to foster partnerships with other departments and outside organizations.

Snezhana Zheltoukhova, in her essay “Language Learning in a ‘Fish-bowl’ Environment: Working with Student Perceptions of Videoconferencing,” examines the main benefits and issues of studying L2 Russian via videoconferencing, as reported in participants’ feedback. Emphasis is placed on issues related to students’ sense of community, student engagement, and to teaching strategies aimed at efficient learning collaboration. Additionally, her study offers ideas for improvements to courses conducted through videoconferencing technologies.

Part III: Concepts of Labor in International Film

The non-fiction film *Pina* (2011) was originally conceived as a collaboration between Wim Wenders and the eponymous choreographer and artistic director of the Tanztheater Wuppertal. However, due to Pina Bausch’s sudden death, the project transformed into a filmic memorial. In her essay “From *Tonfilm* to *Tanzfilm*,” Margit Grieb argues that, in addition to being an homage to the artist, *Pina* can also be seen as a tribute to Wenders’ *Heimat* and a thematic follow-up to his film *Viel passiert*. Whereas *Viel passiert* focuses on musical artists with a spatial grounding in the Rheinland, in *Pina* Wenders highlights the artist Bausch as a product of the Ruhrgebiet. In particular, the film showcases the transformative contributions Pina Bausch made to the institution of dance, while pushing the boundaries of his own artistic medium with 3D recording technology and an innovative approach to the documentary genre. As in *Viel passiert*, in which Wenders uses Wolfgang Niedercken as his own filmic and artistic doppelgänger, *Pina* also continually highlights a connection between the two artists that is not only biographical but aesthetic in nature. In *Pina* the director uses space as a connector for dance and film, in which both Bausch and Wenders emerge as explorers and pioneers, pushing aesthetic boundaries and redefining institutions.

In her essay “Working English and Opportunity: Walls, Doors, and Windows in Bong Joon-ho’s *Snowpiercer*, *Okja*, and *Parasite*,” Sara Gruber examines how foreign directors express their unique perspectives through the juxtaposition of their native language and the dominant language of English. Acknowledging this labor is important in order to understand a film’s critical and popular reception of a film as well as its economic success. Analyzing the works of Bong Joon-ho, the first foreign language film director to win the Academy Award for Best Picture, she demonstrates how walls are built up or torn down between filmmakers and audiences through censorship, socioeconomic status, and language.

Steven Grossvogel's "The Psychology of Labor and Leisure in Fellini's *La dolce vita*" is a close reading of several scenes in the film in which work is either discussed or alluded to. Grossvogel uses Carl Jung's analytical psychology to explain the malaise of the main characters, all of whom either do not work or only do "easy work." Grossvogel concludes that, for Fellini, spiritual fulfillment can be attained by those who are prepared to do "serious work."

In her essay "Lenguaje visual, ambigüedad moral y responsabilidad civil en el filme argentino *Kóblie*," Rosana Díaz-Zambrana discusses the moral ambiguities presented through the experience of an Argentinian military pilot who, tormented by his work during the so-called flights of death, deserts his position and attempts to restart his life. Building on the theories of Hannah Arendt and Zygmunt Bauman on the role of individual moral responsibility during oppressive regimes, Díaz-Zambrana argues that although the pilot seems to be haunted by an unsettled past, his lack of moral- and self-awareness prevents him from working through the trauma in a transformative way. Moreover, the film's strategic use of audiovisual effects and cinematic narrative favors an empathic characterization that attenuates and, at times, relativizes the pilot's moral code and his sense of civic responsibility.

Part IV: The Living Labor of the Theater

Ippokratis Kantzios's essay "Ambiguities and Reversals in Athol Fugard's *The Island*" explores the ways in which the South African playwright reworks Sophocles's *Antigone* through the subtle reenactment of the tragedy's plot by two political prisoners. Languishing in backbreaking forced labor and preparing a makeshift performance of *Antigone*, the two characters are far removed from Sophocles's idealized personages, demonstrating the virtues and vices of the common man, which, in turn, produce tensions, ambiguities, and contradictions. Yet, Fugard's play never evades the old question: do citizens have a duty to accommodate the state, even when its orders violate the fundamentals of human dignity? Through their actions, the two apartheid prisoners respond in the negative. And just as Sophocles's heroine is led into a stone cave to die for her civic disobedience, so will these prisoners be sent into a stone quarry to pay for their defiance with hard labor, ending up more dead than alive and thus becoming themselves modern Antigones.

In her essay "Las mujeres de *Fuente Ovejuna*," Delia García analyzes the female discourses of *Fuente Ovejuna* (Lope de Vega) in order to establish the reasons why this work, written in 1612, has been recovered in the contemporary age for the creation of social theater in favor of feminism.

Employing a sociolinguistic approach, García explains how this classic of world literature serves as feminist literature in its historical context.

Yanina Becco's essay "Teatro y crisis en Argentina (2001-2003): producción y supervivencia durante la debacle económica" analyzes how the 2001-03 economic crisis affected Argentinian theater production and how it changed—likely forever—the way in which playwrights, producers, actors, and even the public, think about theater. For example, the plays analyzed in the essay were written for publication and sometimes never performed. Starting with a general definition of crisis, Becco deals with the economic debacle that the theater had to endure in order to survive. As a direct consequence of the crisis, many performers and technicians lost their jobs due to the closing of venues. National production decreased by more than 50%, giving more room to foreign productions, while playwrights had to resort to simply writing their plays with the hope of getting them published instead of being performed.

In her essay "Tiempo, vida y sueño: Retrospectiva contemporánea y prospectiva poética en el teatro de Calderón de la Barca," Bermaries Vélez Maldonado discusses how the Baroque Calderonian theater, as seen through the works and labor of prospective theory, opens a dialogue between a classic Spanish play and contemporary science fiction. Focusing on *La vida es sueño* (1636), Vélez Maldonado poses the question: To what extent can any classical Spanish play resonate in contemporary prospective literature? Answering this question entails a literary exercise that contemplates the classics through the lens of Spanish science fiction.

Part V: Finding Meaning in Literature

The texts of Amélie Nothomb, which often challenge the readers' desire for verisimilitude, prove to be deceptively simple stories that require retrospective work from the reader to discover the layers of work with the language to create a world that only makes perfect sense through often invisible narrative threads that create a literary (for lack of a better word) coherence. Yves-Antoine Clemmen's essay "Amélie Nothomb : travail aux frontières de la langue," demonstrates this work through a novel that keeps displacing the reader's sense of who the protagonist really is. *Les Prénoms épicénes* ("unisex first names") defies any attempt at plot summary, as the summary of the intrigue completely misses what is actually happening in this text as it displaces the center of the story between the three characters with ungendered names as a receptacle of narrative possibilities. Finding the truth of this text that the author describes as reduced to its essentials requires one to identify all the work that went into its construction.

In her essay “The Wandering of the Reader: Perspective and Possibility in Heinrich von Kleist’s *Das Erdbeben in Chili*,” Katherine Pollock considers the work required for a hermeneutic interpretation of this novella, insofar as it is possible. While prominent readings of *Erdbeben* consider the instability of meaning, rather than illuminating it in the text, Pollock utilizes a phenomenological approach to describe how the readers’ experience wandering through the available textual perspectives allows them to reveal the text’s possible meanings. She argues that perspectives are formally present at crucial moments, but deprived of content, disrupting the act of reading. As such, the “solution” to the textual puzzle is its unsolvability. The meaning of the work becomes its necessary openness, which the interpreter must not violate. Possibility functions as a formal category that delimits contingencies, and interpretive work involves discovering the ways perspectives relate without enacting closure, thereby contributing to the puzzle.

In “The Philosophical Uses of Aphorism in Lichtenberg and Wittgenstein,” Christopher Hoyt describes a German-language tradition of aphorism pioneered by Georg Lichtenberg and perfected by Ludwig Wittgenstein. They, along with a coterie of other German-language writers, marshalled the aphorism to limn a third option between the rationalism that dominated the Enlightenment and the romanticism that was its leading competitor. Implicit in the rational ideal lies the image of society as an economic collective of individuals bound together through work and the public negotiation of truth. The romantic complement typically regards the individual as having direct access to truth via intuition or immediate perception of nature. Lichtenberg and Wittgenstein use the aphorism to provoke the reader to reconsider the implicit assumptions that wrongly limit us to the rational and romantic alternatives, and to open our eyes to the countless means and modes of knowledge that are possible.

Heike Scharm’s contribution, “Cultivating De-growth: Spanish Eco-Fiction in the Era of Climate Change,” presents the recent novel *The Disingusting Ones* (*Los asquerosos*), by the Spanish writer Santiago Lorenzo, as an example of how attitudes and values concerning work and labor have changed since the 2008 economic crisis in Europe. The novel offers a critical view on capitalism as an ideological, political, and social system tied to progress and individual well-being. Scharm’s reading of the novel takes as its starting point recent critical theories of degrowth, which reject consumerism and, instead, propose alternate goals and values leading to happiness. Proponents of degrowth redefine work ethics by shifting the focus away from “work” onto “ethics.” Relying on degrowth theory, Scharm shows to what extent Lorenzo’s novel can be read as a 21st-century robinsonade that constructs a different kind of civilization, one more in tune with the environment and with free time as its new currency.

In his essay “The Center-Forward’s Travails: Soccer’s Monstrous Machinery in *El refuerzo* by Horacio Convertini,” Carlos Bertoglio invokes Sigmund Freud’s concept of the *unheimlich* in order to approach the ruthless, ominous, yet warmly familiar business of professional soccer as experienced by the novel’s central character, an aging and under-performing player. A recurrent theme in contemporary Argentine soccer fiction, especially relevant in this work, is the presentation of individuals as indentured laborers within the realm of sports capitalism: they are owned, spoken through, and imprisoned by the power and deadly grip of traditional journalistic narratives.

In his essay “Viajes en el tiempo en la ciencia ficción española: Un determinismo científico en la literatura y el cine,” Marlon Andrés Cáceres Delgado argues that Spanish science fiction shows a scientific determinism in regards to time travel, creating a remarkable trend in both cinematographic and literary production. This begins with the introduction of the time machine in the novel *El anacronópete* (1887) by Enrique Gaspar y Rimbau. In contrast to H.G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* (1895), which focuses on the social problems of a dystopian civilization, *El anacronópete* uses scientific terminology to explain what makes time travel possible. This trend toward scientific determinism and the idea that time and destiny cannot be changed sets Spanish sci-fi apart from its Anglo-American counterpart, which focuses on mere entertainment.

Part VI: Imagining the Nation

Gabriel García Márquez’s novel *The General in his Labyrinth* (1989) focuses on Simón Bolívar’s (1783-1830) final days, introducing the reader to the intricate politics of Spanish America’s independence period. In his essay “Hero Tropes, Epistemology, and Simón Bolívar’s Image Making,” Lucas Izquierdo argues that, in a Bakhtinian sense, García Márquez’s humanized portrayal of Bolívar combines modalities of time and space that intersect with the novel and epic genres. As the breakaway from European masters generated the conditions in which secular social constructs can be imagined, the novel reflects upon foundational notions of subject and community in Spanish America.

In his critique “Doña Bárbara y Amistad funesta: un encuentro descabellado,” Héctor Manuel Gutiérrez analyzes the works of two Hispanic political activists, José Martí of Cuba and Rómulo Gallegos of Venezuela, delving into the circumstances that made up both individuals as authors and establishing similarities and contrasts in order to establish a joint vision of their respective literary cosmos. In addition to having played important political roles in the founding or transformation of their

nations, Martí and Gallegos addressed the “nature versus civilization” conflict, a concern of considerable importance during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Focusing on contemporaneity and in light of the gradual expansion of some controversial historical processes, Gutiérrez proposes a close observation of how those ideas, now molded into pamphlet blocks and platforms somewhat removed from the early conceptions of their time, have shaped the political face of the American continent up to the present day.

In his paper “Concepts of *Heimat*,” Stephan K. Schindler analyzes how 21st-century social media outlets have contributed to the re-emergence of the German concept of *Heimat* (home, homeland, native region, or belonging) by enabling local agents to create a new public sphere for discussing ideas of memory, identity, belonging, and the socio-political challenges of the regional. *Heimat* has long been associated with negative connotations: rural provincialism, the linguistic confines of dialect, naïve identification with idealized nature, traditional regional customs, regressive longing to return to the maternal womb, the *völkisch* ideology of the Nazis, the vindictive politics of the *Heimatvertriebene* (post-war German expellees from Eastern Europe), or the kitsch of the so-called *Heimatfilm* of the 1950s. Thus, the concept seems too steeped in reactionary tradition to have any value in the 21st century. Schindler’s essay shows how, in times of global migration, deep mistrust in the German nation state and national unity leads to “rediscoveries” of the local, and *Heimat* re-emerges in contemporary (popular) culture: local food cultures are returning under the umbrella of sustainability, local sports entertainment actively utilizes *Heimat* as an expression of historical memory and belonging, right-wing fanatics envision a *Heimat* without migrants, displaced migrants are in search of a new *Heimat*, and philosophers continue to deconstruct *Heimat* as utopia.

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Part I: Working on Race and Gender

French Slave Museum Curation as Public Scholarship: Reflecting on the Past, Realizing the Present, Envisaging the Future

Ima Hicks

The work of curation places equal emphasis on transmission and conservation as it does access to modes of knowledge. In this essay, I will examine how slavery exhibitions in French museums engage with the notion of curation in terms of its museological meaning and the political context during the development of resources that represent, educate, and shape collective values and social understandings while reflecting the multiple audiences they aim to address and serve.

At the Musée d'Aquitaine (Aquitaine Museum) in Bordeaux and the Château des Ducs de Bretagne (Castle of the Dukes of Brittany) in Nantes, where slavery exhibits are part of permanent collections, the museological turn in the commemoration of slavery in France reflects a contested national history within a society that is currently discussing national identity. The building that now houses the new Foundation for the Memory of Slavery in the French capital, Paris, was once home to France's Ministry for the Navy and Colonies as well as the site of the signing, by French abolitionist and politician Victor Schoelcher, of the decree ending slavery in the French colonies in 1848. Today, the Foundation continues the discussion of contemporary debates and issues regarding how museum work in France permits symbolic recognition of the importance of slave-related locations and encourages an active response in the context of the French Atlantic to Edward Linenthal's reflection on slavery heritage sites in North America. "Conscientious remembrance," Linenthal writes, "is more than a necessary expansion of a nation's narrative. It is an act of moral engagement, a declaration that there are other [...] lives too long forgotten that count" (Linenthal 224). The question of how Atlantic slavery, a founding institution of contemporary racism against Afro-descendant people, is commemorated on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean is a politically and academically relevant issue as we enter the second half of the United Nations' International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024). Moreover, its relevance is significant as the United States concluded, in 2019, its yearlong remembrance of the entry of the first African slaves in Virginia.

In November 2019, the French National Committee for the Memory and History of Slavery was replaced by the Foundation for the Memory

of Slavery which, in the words of French President Emmanuel Macron, will help

“to put slavery back in the long history of France, from the first French colonial empire to the present day, because it is impossible to talk about France today without mentioning its colonial past, without saying in particular the singular relationship it maintains with the African continent—this complex and profound relationship that has become an inalienable part of our respective identities.”

It is in Bordeaux and Nantes, however, that the inscription of slavery into civic, regional, and national history has been most actively explored. Notably, in both cities, the principal municipal museums—the Château des Ducs de Bretagne in Nantes and the Musée d’Aquitaine in Bordeaux—have, within the past few decades, considerably adjusted the emphases of permanent exhibitions to acknowledge the place of slavery in the civic past and its legacies in the present. Both places reveal complex histories of forgetting and remembering, processes that have entailed varying degrees of active resistance to the recovery of histories and memories of slavery. Additionally, both locations contain evidence of instrumentalization of the past to serve political and other purposes in the present.

Since 2007, the Musée d’Histoire, located in the Château des Ducs de Bretagne, includes three rooms that reflect the role of Nantes as well as its hinterland in the Atlantic slave trade and exports to the Caribbean. These rooms also give a general overview of the Atlantic slave trade, plantation economy, slavery, and include documentary films and various media. For instance, a voyage of a slave ship is described from the perspective of a young French seaman. However, sources that mirror the perspectives of slaves are unfortunately missing. In Musée d’Histoire, the focus is on the interrelation of the town and slave trade. The open-air Mémorial de l’Abolition de l’Esclavage in Nantes, which opened in 2012, is dedicated to the international fight for the abolition of slavery. Glass plaques set into the ground along the path to the memorial contain the names of slave ships that originated from Nantes. The stone construction below the earth is intended to evoke images of a slave ship. Quotations from the speeches of historical personalities (e.g., slave narrators, abolitionists, contemporary politicians, and artists) and texts of French laws refer to the value of freedom, but the voices of the enslaved and women are underrepresented (quotations 4 and 5 of 37, respectively; Frith 84). Regrettably, the planned education center was not built because of financial reasons. Thus, the informative value of the monument is low; it mainly consists of a map and a timeline of abolitions, which is closer to

the French tradition of the nation's self-styling that invented human rights and less like a critical remembrance of the past. A memorial to abolition makes little sense in a town in which the leading families had opposed the eradication of slave trade. The conflict between the local Anneaux de la Mémoire ("Rings of Memory" or "Rings of Remembrance", but also an allusion to slaves' chains) organizations and the principal promoter of the memorial may be a cause for this critique. The small groups of Black activists in Nantes such as Jean-Paul Ngassa and Peter Lema from the Passerelle Noire and the Martinican Octave Cestor of Mémoire de l'Outre-Mer expressed strong criticisms against this form of memory because it is also aimed at promoting a positive image of the town in light of its history. They believe that this version excludes the African perspective. My personal critique is that the quotations presented in such sites communicate little without clear explanations of the historical context and the perspectives of the quoted persons themselves. The absence of the voices of the enslaved can be explained by the fact that French (Caribbean) historians have published sources that reflect the position of the enslaved (e. g., petitions and courts records with respect to mistreatment), including, notably, the stories of individual women, Antillean slave colonies only relatively recently. [See Moitt's *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles*; Frith's *At the Limits of Memory*, and the Anneaux de la Mémoire website cited at article's end.] The critique of the absence of African or Afro-Caribbean voices cannot be applied to the itinerary exposition titled "TOSTEM, Tourism around sites of the slave trade, slavery and their memories," created by the Anneaux de la Mémoire with historians, activists, and artists from Cameroon, Senegal, Antigua, Barbados, and Haiti. In an exhibition in Angers, the same organization also presented the entanglements of the hinterland of Nantes and the Loire-Atlantique region with the Atlantic world and slave trade; in doing so, it approached a little-known theme. Not only did European capitals and port towns profit from Atlantic slavery but their hinterlands did as well.

The focus is on the presence of slavery and its legacies in the municipal context, and there is a telling illustration of how the impact of the slavery systems became evident in the material objects of everyday life. However, within the galleries presenting the domestic interiors of merchants' houses, there is a clear risk of the master's story dominating the museum's narrative. The emphasis in two galleries devoted to the furniture of eighteenth-century merchants engaged in the Atlantic trade is reminiscent of plantation heritage sites in the American south, in the presentation of which sumptuous furnishings often seem to play a more important role than the labor of the enslaved. Nevertheless, what is striking and challenging about the Nantes museum is the way it openly acknowledges the troubled processes that underpinned its development. Most notably, "L'Abolition de

l'Esclavage," a sculpture by Liza Marcault-Derouard, produced for the sesquicentenary of abolition in April 1998, which was vandalized several days later, is integrated into the museum's penultimate room as a clear reminder that the acceptance of Nantes' slaving past remains a controversial and often fraught process. The transfer of this artwork to the Château, with traces of the damage it suffered intact, highlights the ultimately disruptive role played by the museum: here is an object illustrating the city's recent history, but also a memorial artifact that actively draws visitors to reflect on the links between the histories and memories of slavery in civic space.

Moving to Bordeaux, the history of slavery is approached, as in Nantes, in a museological context through the slavery-related displays of the Musée d'Aquitaine, where slavery is largely acknowledged as the source of economic wealth for the French port city. Much of the exhibition focuses on the commercial aspects of the transatlantic slave trade, with emphasis on slavery being primarily linked to capital. The written descriptions may be especially troubling to those concerned with "political correctness" or words scholars should no longer use to describe slavery. For example, the argument could be made that in the context of museology, the presentation should probably use *Traite transatlantique des esclaves* or put «*traite négrière*» (which translates from French as the "trade of Negroes" or "trafficking in blacks") between quotation marks as a way to center the humanity of the slave-trade victims rather than reinforce the old racialized worldview.

A display that occupies a prominent position within the exhibition is a Fon Fetish originating from the kingdom of Dahomey—today, the Republic of Benin—located on the Gulf of Guinea, which served as one of the main centers of the French slave trade. The Musée d'Aquitaine label states the following:

This unique Botchio is covered with authentic and very old slave chains and includes two crocodile skulls. Its role is connected to the removal of enchantment, symbolized here by the chains. The crocodile skulls on the front and back of the statue act to contain the energy carried by the fetish. Objects including slave chains are very rare as they have frequently been destroyed in a later attempt to efface the traumatic memory of the slave trade.

What is missing from the text is how the product was procured. Cultural heritage constitutes an inalienable part of a people's sense of self and of community; it functions as a link between the past, present, and future. Given the discussion surrounding the re-institution and repatriation of looted African art, however, one wonders how long this display and other

African artifacts pillaged during the colonial period will continue to remain in permanent European collections. For the moment, at least, the educative and pedagogical value of these objects is enormous, particularly with regard to the reception processes they prompt and the enriching discussions that can develop around several questions: what are the socio-political issues involved in these representational practices? How can such objects be dealt with today? How, for whom, and to whom can we tell the stories that they embody and to which they bear witness? While the archives associated with such objects may be veritable treasure troves, in mining them, we must guard against defusing the potentiality of their explosive charge. In this context, what role can fiction and the imagination play and what are the strategies that artists, activists, and curators can deploy? Finally, can work on archives act as a form of reparation?

In 2009, the official celebration for the national slavery commemoration day was moved from Paris and was held in Bordeaux to mark the opening of the permanent exhibition, *Bordeaux, le Commerce Atlantique et l'Esclavage* [Bordeaux: the Atlantic trade and slavery], in the Musée d'Aquitaine. The four rooms devoted to this exhibit focused firmly on Bordeaux itself, initially drawing the visitor into the material circumstances of the eighteenth-century city. The display seeks to reflect more clearly on Bordeaux's global context than is the case in Nantes; on occasion, the museological apparatus also actively relativizes the role of the city by stressing that Nantes predominated in the French trade and underlining the pre-existence of North and sub-Saharan African slavery. References to slavery as a common practice with a long history dating back to medieval times as well as its widespread use on the African continent seem to elide the city's specific role in the slave trade with a more international narrative. Additionally, these implicit disclaimers appear to justify the French involvement in the slave trade, rather than honoring its descendants.

What emerges in the Bordeaux displays is a firm sense of the lived experience of slavery, supporting the sense that "the new museal space was intended to lay to rest the long-held idea that Bordeaux was suffering from amnesia." The diorama of a plantation—similar to that created in Nantes and a staple element of a conventional museological approach to Atlantic slavery—is supplemented, for instance, by a rich collection of iconography that illustrates not abolition but the casual, systematic, everyday violence that the plantation system depended upon. Finally, inspired by a similar innovation in Liverpool (where there is a "Black Achievers Wall"), but developing it in a different direction, the Bordeaux exhibit ends with a heritage room, including a "*mur de la diversité*" [wall of diversity], which is markedly monochrome because the faces of the city's residents it displays are exclusively Black. As visitors and inhabitants of the city