

✧ Introduction ✧

The Marseille Mosaic

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“Quand on regarde une mosaïque, on la regarde de près . . . , on ne voit que des carreaux de pierre de différentes couleurs; on recule . . . et se révèle à nos yeux ce que la mosaïque représente. Pour moi, c’est ça Marseille; si on regarde de trop près on verra que des carreaux séparés de couleurs différentes; quand on recule, on voit l’ensemble et l’ensemble est magnifique.”¹

—Philippe Fragione/Akhenaton, IAM

On 15 August 2020, the French rapper JuL released the first single of his collaborative project 13 Organisé. The song, “Bande Organisée,” includes solo verses from eight of Marseille’s most famous rappers: SCH, Kofs, JuL, Naps, Soso Maness, Elams, Solda, and Houari. “Bande organisée” quickly broke several national records: it reached platinum status (thirty million streams) in twenty-five days² and diamond status (100 million streams) in just thirty-nine days,³ the fastest-ever timeframe for both certifications for a French rap song. The music video accomplished similar record-breaking feats and reached 100 million views on YouTube in just forty-eight hours.⁴ By the end of 2020, the song had become the most streamed song of all time in France.⁵ On 9 October 2020, the group released its album, eponymously titled *13 Organisé*,⁶ with collaborative contributions from fifty of Marseille’s highest-profile rappers.

In their songs, the rappers of 13 Organisé engage directly with the many discourses in circulation in France about their native city: fast cars and illicit economies, but also the beauty of the Mediterranean sun and the unity of Marseille residents. As Akhenaton (founding member of the group IAM) raps in “Je suis Marseille”: “I’m a child of the cranes

and containers / But keep in mind that this little plot of land brings us together.”⁷ While the rappers acknowledge both the perceived grittiness and undeniable beauty of their city, they also express pride in their city, its landscape, and its celebrated soccer team, the Olympique de Marseille. The ability to transcend confining stereotypes is another source of pride for these rappers, as they proclaim in the refrain of “Bande Organisée”: “In an organized band, no one can contain us.”⁸

This rap album, and particularly the single “Bande Organisée,” is a useful starting point for our current book, *The Marseille Mosaic*. The album articulates how Marseille generates a multiplicity of discourses that can work with and in opposition to each other. In depicting both limestone *calanques* (mountainous sea inlets) and pristine beaches as well as the concrete towers of subsidized housing, the video for “Bande Organisée” presents Marseille as both a beautiful city on the Mediterranean and a place where people suffer (from crime, poverty, and socioeconomic exclusion). But what ultimately unifies these rappers is their direct engagement in what it means to live in Marseille today. The songs frequently underscore shared references, particularly geographic locations such as la Canebière, the Vieux Port, and the Avenue Prado, and the video for “Bande Organisée” features several scenes in which the rappers are dressed as Olympique de Marseille players (and are rapping in the renowned Stade Vélodrome while tossing around a soccer ball).

This reference to the Olympique de Marseille merits additional attention, as one of the many commonly held stereotypes about Marseille is deconstructed in the video.⁹ As the video moves from clips inside the Stade Vélodrome to many other iconic images such as that of “la Bonne Mère” or the Notre-Dame de la Garde basilica that sits high atop the southern hill overlooking the Vieux Port, the rappers proudly establish their sense of place and belonging. Yet at the same time, they also make fun of viewers who may expect to see other stereotypes mobilized: at the end of the video the rappers enact a scene that leads viewers to believe that a group of men dressed entirely in black are arriving on Marseille’s beaches with illicit cargo.¹⁰ When the group lands on the beach, however, they open up a mysterious bag that, rather than containing drugs or weapons, features the promotional logo of the 13 Organisé project. The video thus challenges viewers to reconsider their stereotypes about Marseille, as expectations are subverted when a scene depicting potential criminality is neutralized by the symbol of these rappers’ artistic project. They are, in a sense, redefining on their own terms what it means to be Marseillais and how to think about Marseille.

It also bears mentioning that the album's tremendous success in France demonstrates a national audience for rap music with Marseille as its principal focus. The group's popularity can be situated within the popularity of rap music in France more generally, but it also connects to the well-studied importance of rap in Marseille.¹¹ Rap has had a strong presence in Marseille since the genre first arrived in France in the 1980s, and scholars have previously studied how Marseille-based rappers (most famously the group IAM) have softened some of the harder core approaches of Paris-based groups and promoted social commentary that emphasizes communities over divisions.¹² The 13 Organisé project can thus be situated in a longer trajectory of Marseillais artists using rap to contest stereotypes and reassert local pride in the face of difficult socioeconomic circumstances.

Keeping in mind that a city's complexity can be obscured by stereotypes and imprecise understandings of local social, cultural, and political phenomena,¹³ we have designed our book as a collaborative publication involving researchers from various disciplinary traditions who, above all else, share a deep engagement in understanding Marseille. We argue that the only way to do justice to the social, cultural, and political complexities of the city is to consider it from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, arising from both the humanities and social sciences. As described in greater detail below, each of the four sections of the book addresses key themes in the city's history and current evolution. Approaching these themes from different disciplines, the analyses presented here offer diverse methodologies and highlight different aspects of the city. Rather than a portrait of Marseille's exceptionalism, what emerges are diverse but interconnected perspectives on the features of the city that have marked its distinctive and singular identity. Our contributors consider Marseille's history as a Mediterranean port and its challenges in housing successive waves of immigrants; artistic representations of Marseille and its populations in literature, cinema, visual arts, and music; as well as local initiatives designed to support communities in various parts of Marseille's "111 villages." Marseille is a brilliantly idiosyncratic city: issues of ethnic, religious, and class conflict have evolved differently here and for a longer time than elsewhere in France, and its contrasts are striking. The city's center has the highest disparity between rich and poor in France, but Marseille has also been praised for a more participatory civic culture¹⁴ and for privileging political integration over assimilation.¹⁵ In addressing such aspects of the city's past and present, we explore the distinctive trajectories and possible futures taking shape in Marseille's diverse neighborhoods, cultures, and political traditions.

The Crossroads of Marseille, Past and Present

This study of Marseille is timely for several reasons, most notably because the city is currently undergoing a key moment of transition after Jean-Claude Gaudin's twenty-five years (1995–2020) as mayor. The future of Marseille's city hall is far from clear: when Gaudin announced he would not seek reelection in 2020, the political landscape in the center-right political party Les Républicains had not coalesced around a central figure. Several political parties on the left came together to form the *Printemps marseillais*, a coalition whose primary goal was to end Gaudin's long-standing political influence and control. Michèle Rubirola (Les Verts) was elected as the first female mayor of Marseille in June 2020 but stepped down in December 2020, citing health concerns. She was succeeded by Benoît Payan (Parti Socialiste), who will serve until 2026. In a city long known for its political dynasties,¹⁶ the current instability represents a noteworthy shift, and the next several years will be crucial in determining the path Marseille takes in the twenty-first century.

As he defines his vision for Marseille, Mayor Payan is presented with several challenges as well as several opportunities. The Euroméditerranée development project has reconstructed an extensive zone in the city's center, but as Marie Beschon notes in her chapter in this volume, it has come with a high cost to long-term neighborhood residents who can no longer afford to live there. The city was also selected as the European Capital of Culture in 2013, which allowed it to showcase its rich traditions in visual arts and theatre talent as well as to develop new initiatives, such as the Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (Mucem).¹⁷ At the same time, however, the final two years of Gaudin's tenure were marked by protests and heightened mobilization by citizens' groups demanding that the mayor address past municipal neglect and deteriorating conditions in Marseille's poorest neighborhoods.¹⁸ A critical catalyst was the devastating building collapse in 2018, when two buildings on the rue d'Aubagne disintegrated, killing eight people. Referenced by many of the chapters here, the rue d'Aubagne disaster reveals the many ways Mayor Payan is now faced with a city of distinct and dramatic opposites: wealthy and economically struggling people live in close proximity and are forced to navigate Marseille's transition into the twenty-first century together.

Over the past decade Marseille has also become an increasingly popular tourist destination, with cruise ships taking advantage of its newly constructed dock area, complete with shopping malls, trendy restaurants, and sleek high-rise buildings. On travel websites and in tour

guides, the city is often presented as a place where “grit and grandeur coexist seamlessly”¹⁹ in a supposedly harmonious intercultural melting pot of languages, foods, and flavors.²⁰ This “cosmopolitanism” has been a central theme in national discourse and within the city itself, as Jean-Claude Sevin discusses in his chapter here. Situated somewhere between myth and reality,²¹ Marseille’s cosmopolitanism has its origins in a long and varied history of immigration and an urban geography in which the city’s center has long been home to many of its most impoverished residents, including new immigrant and refugee arrivals. Its mythic qualities depend greatly on the contentious relations with otherness to which this history has given rise. They also depend on the ways Marseille as a “case study” has served within national discourse about urban planning and the integration of immigrants.²²

The importance of immigration to urban planning can be traced back as early as the 1500s, with the rise in trade from the Levant. In 1669 the local government responded to concerns that traders from the Middle East frequently came to the city for a short time, made significant sums of money in trade, and subsequently departed. Officials therefore established a 20 percent import tax for foreign traders, but these traders were welcome to formally settle in the city and benefit from the protections granted to Marseille-based traders. This law encouraged traders to establish their businesses in Marseille, thus solidifying international trade (and the immigration that resulted) as a pillar of Marseille’s economy.²³

Immigration to Marseille saw a significant increase in the nineteenth century: documents from the 1830 census indicate that Marseille’s population of 130,000 included approximately 10,000 residents from other parts of the world, while in 1914 Marseille’s population of 600,000 included 110,000 foreign-born residents.²⁴ This expansion was largely fueled by immigration from Italy—throughout the nineteenth century Italian-born residents constituted nearly 80 percent of Marseille’s immigrant community.²⁵ After World War I, however, Marseille’s immigrant population diversified quickly and dramatically; in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, 20,000 Greeks and 60,000 Armenians arrived in Marseille, many of whom chose to settle there.²⁶

Population figures in the years surrounding World War II are complicated by Marseille’s unique experience during the war. Given its location on the Mediterranean and its long history of trade with the French colonies, it became a hub of departure for the Caribbean for refugees seeking to travel to the United States. Census figures in 1946 reveal 636,000 immigrants in the city.²⁷ World War II was a distinctly disruptive moment in Marseille’s history; as Anna Seghers’ poignant novel *Transit* clarifies, thousands of people came to Marseille with the explicit goal of leav-

ing France as quickly as possible.²⁸ American aid organizations such as the Emergency Rescue Committee set up their offices in Marseille (under the guidance of Varian Fry) and worked in an increasingly hostile environment.²⁹

But it is the end of the Algerian War in 1962 that was to bring the most dramatic changes to Marseille in its recent history. If, throughout France, the legacy of the Algerian War continues to have a strong if often unacknowledged influence, this has been especially true in Marseille.³⁰ It was in Marseille in the summer of 1962 that the *Pied-Noir* was born.³¹ Marseille was the transit point for over 60 percent of the migrants.³² The traumatic experience of arrival in this city—ill-equipped to handle a massive wave of displaced people the state government had underestimated and was not keen to publicize—became central to the *Pied-Noir* narrative emphasizing France’s neglect of its repatriate community.³³ The hostility encountered in Marseille, illustrated by Mayor Gaston Defferre’s statement in a July interview that *Pieds-Noirs* should “go get readapted elsewhere!”³⁴ was viewed as representative of French attitudes in general. This event also had a powerful impact on the social composition of the city. Although the plan was for resettlement throughout France, many stayed in Marseille and the broader Provence region.³⁵

This *Pied-Noir* presence has undoubtedly had an impact on politics locally, but the city has also been a prominent symbolic site in French “memory wars”³⁶ regarding the colonial era and Algeria in particular. As Anissa Bouayed discusses in her chapter, it was in Marseille in 2005 that then Prime Minister Jacques Chirac proposed building a monument to “the civilizing work of France overseas.”³⁷ That same year, a law was passed requiring that French school curricula “recognise in particular the positive role of the French presence overseas.”³⁸ The added words “notably in North Africa” made it clear that the primary audience was the *Pied-Noir* community. While the law was ultimately abrogated and the monument never built, these events remind us that the legacy of Marseille’s role as colonial port and point of transit extends far beyond 1962. Studies of *Pied-Noir* memory have shown its global resonance and its ongoing importance nationally within struggles to “gain control over historical and commemorative activities.”³⁹ But they also show how, as Andrea Smith has noted in her insightful ethnography, “consideration of a group’s past helps us to understand the power today of specific places.”⁴⁰ Marseille’s central role in shaping *Pied-Noir* memory has contributed in a powerful way to national debates about the colonial legacy, particularly regarding Algeria.

As Ed Naylor’s chapter demonstrates, the flood of French repatriates and *harkis*⁴¹ into the city following the Algerian War necessitated the

rapid construction of massive public housing projects in the peripheral northern neighborhoods. This construction—and the colonial distinctions it reproduced—was carried out throughout France in the early 1960s as HLMs (*habitation à loyer modéré*, or housing at moderate rent) with the names of modernist artists sprouted in urban peripheries, part of the broader “imprint” of the Algerian War on French cities.⁴² These changes contributed to the strong demographic growth between 1954 and 1975 in Marseille, when the city gained 260,000 inhabitants.⁴³

Toward the end of this period, Marseille became the focus of national media attention because of heightened xenophobia and racist violence. In 1973, following the killing of bus driver Émile Guerlache by a mentally ill man of North African descent (Salah Boughrine), six Maghrebi men were killed. In September of that year, *Le Monde* described Marseille as a “capital of racism.”⁴⁴ In December, the Algerian Consulate was bombed. As Yvan Gastaut has noted, following these acts in 1973 that defined Marseille as “the epicenter of the problematics of racism,”⁴⁵ Marseille came to be understood nationally as the city “where ethnic conflicts were most concentrated.”⁴⁶ More specifically, as Rachida Brahim has noted concerning the case of Émile Guerlache, events in Marseille crystallized concerns about *immigration sauvage*, or uncontrolled immigration. A recurrent theme in the national press in the 1970s was the difficulty of assimilating immigrants (specifically North Africans) and the dangers this posed to public order. Brahim notes, “Salah Boughrine personifies these diverse dangers.”⁴⁷ Her analysis highlights both the anti-Maghrebi violence specific to Marseille that followed this event and the ways this case in Marseille served an important symbolic role within a national discourse about immigration and integration.

The acts of 1973 are part of a larger history of racism and antiforeigner violence in Marseille that predates the postcolonial period.⁴⁸ This includes violence both by individuals and by extremist organizations such as the Groupe Charles-Martel. Three subsequent acts are particularly notable for their impact on the city and what they tell us about the place of Marseille in the national imaginary. The first occurred in 1980, when seventeen-year-old Lahouari Ben Mohamed was shot and killed by a policeman in La Busserine neighborhood following an identity check. As Ben Mohamed and his friends were preparing to leave, one of the police officers (who had earlier told the young people he was “trigger-happy”) shot the young man four times.⁴⁹ The policeman received a ten-month prison sentence, with four months suspended—“justice de velours,” as *Libération* described it.⁵⁰

Events such as these contributed to the support for a second important event. Marseille was the starting point for the March for Equality and

Against Racism in 1983, a touchstone moment for antiracist activism in France. The march toward Paris started from La Cayolle neighborhood (formerly the site of a major temporary housing development, or *cit  de transit*), where a twelve-year-old boy had been killed by a bomb in March of that year. According to Beaud and Masclat, Marseille was chosen as the departure point for its symbolic importance as the principal port of arrival of Algerian immigrants.⁵¹

The third key event occurred in 1995 when Ibrahim Ali, a young man of Comorian immigrant heritage, was shot and killed one night by supporters of the National Front. Minayo Nasiali has examined the national discourse around this incident (including expressions of support for those who killed Ali). Noting that many of the people identified as immigrants or “of immigrant origin” in the French media were undeniably French, Nasiali argues that statements by National Front leader Bruno M gret “drew on widespread assumptions that associated immigrants with racial difference and national decline.”⁵² Although Ali was French, M gret referred to him as “the Comorian,” a phrasing that obscures the complex relations between France and the Comoro Islands.⁵³ Nasiali’s analysis highlights both the local Marseillais nature of this story (people of Comorian descent make up roughly 10 percent of the city’s population) and the ways the specificities of this segment of Marseille’s population came to be minimized or misrepresented. If Marseille has been “good to think” in national debates about immigration and integration, the real conditions in the city have often been distorted to serve the aims of those referring to it.⁵⁴

The violent and xenophobic side of the city challenges the myth of Marseille as a purely harmonious multicultural utopia, but it also helps to explain why examples illustrating a distinctively Marseillais cosmopolitanism (such as the interfaith Marseille-Esp rance group founded by former mayor Vigouroux in 1990) have been embraced and highly publicized by municipal authorities. The myth of cosmopolitanism has gained currency as a means of countering external criticism of violence in the city. This has been especially important because of the tendency in the national press to exaggerate the dysfunctional and dangerous aspects of the city, a theme explored by Cesare Mattina and Nicolas Maisetti in their chapter here.⁵⁵ As Michel Peraldi has noted, the national media exhibits a fascination with the perceived foreignness of Marseille (an “*exotisme de proximit *”) and often portrays the city as a “national laboratory of social problems.”⁵⁶

Another aspect of the relationship between immigration and urban planning may be seen in ethnicized housing policies that have contributed to the social marginalization of people of immigrant descent.⁵⁷

While the use of racialized categories to determine preferred residents of public housing is hardly unique to Marseille,⁵⁸ this question is perhaps particularly important in Marseille given that poverty is widely dispersed across the urban territory, including the city center. Today, Marseille's "inverted" residential structure stands in sharp contrast to the "classic" center-periphery model of most French cities.⁵⁹ The most highly valued real estate is outside the city center and thus resembles the devaluation of the downtown core of many postindustrial American cities. But Marseille's center is not hollowed out and empty. It has been (and remains) a zone of transition for many new arrivals to the city. There exists what Marcel Roncayolo has called a "duplication" of the centrality of Marseille.⁶⁰ Historically the central port area has constituted "a working-class centrality in its own right, a place for the socialization and entertainment of populations that flock to it from the whole Marseille area."⁶¹

Closer to North Africa than to Paris and formerly the gateway to the French empire, Marseille exemplifies the postcolonial era that has seen Europe reshaped by waves of immigrants, refugees, and repatriates. Examining projected and realized urban transformations between the 1920s and the years of rebuilding after World War II, Sheila Crane argues that the case of Marseille provides evidence of how "the history of imperialism and colonialism reshaped not only colonial cities and other overseas territories but also cities in Europe long before the end of empire."⁶² Marseille's history shows it to be *both* a privileged site of immigration where one may find local institutions and associations devoted to facilitating the integration of newcomers *and* a site of racist and xenophobic violence where the far right routinely garners high electoral support. It is a place where "tensions in the relationship to alterity"⁶³ have been vitally important both to the city's internal evolution and to national debates about immigration, citizenship, and national belonging.

Mosaics in Art History and Beyond

The title of this book, *The Marseille Mosaic*, pays homage to—and interrogates—an art form that has been present throughout the Mediterranean region for nearly three thousand years. Although sizes, styles, and uses of mosaics vary throughout the world and over time, they share a basic artistic project of using many small pieces to represent a larger image. Made with materials ranging from stones, glass, and pottery to turquoise, ivory, and jade, mosaics can be found on walls and floors in various public and private settings.⁶⁴ Within the field of art history, mo-

saics are poorly understood because researchers have access to very little concrete information, such as who commissioned a piece and how it was designed and implemented. While many sources frequently cite the Byzantine tradition as the pinnacle of mosaic production, Liz James asserts that even this label is problematic: the precise geographic and ethnic “identity” of an artist cannot be reduced to a category as broad as Byzantine, which did not serve as a point of reference during the era and region subsequently defined by this term.⁶⁵

Art historians have also struggled with how to analyze and interpret mosaics. As Rebecca Molholt notes in her study of labyrinth mosaics in Roman bath houses, “modern scholars have tended to regard mosaics as if they were paintings or were created in emulation of painting.”⁶⁶ Rather than subsuming mosaics into artistic analysis designed for the close-up study of works such as oil paintings, it is necessary to factor in considerations such as distance (for large wall mosaics) or movement (for floor designs). James adds that it is equally unreasonable to study these pieces “as though mosaics were paintings in frames displayed in galleries.”⁶⁷ Such a reduction in the interpretation and analysis of mosaics leaves out significant factors, such as where they were located (in houses, city spaces, or religious buildings such as churches or mosques) and how their positioning interacts with the architecture and lighting of the spaces in which they are built. While many fields of study (such as law, immigration, and national security)⁶⁸ have adopted the mosaic metaphor and draw on mosaics’ supposedly unique characteristics, the form has been an enigmatic object of art history scholarship, resisting interpretation according to the analytic definitions, conventions, and categories used for other works of art.

In reference to cities, “mosaic” has generally been used to describe the juxtaposition of diverse components of urban society separated from one another, whether the borders are conceived in social or geographic terms. Thus, for example, Park and Burgess, in their classic 1925 study *The City*, state that “the processes of segregation establish moral distances which make the city a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate.”⁶⁹ They note that in an earlier era (prior to the widespread use of the telephone and the automobile), “the city was still a mosaic of little neighborhoods.”⁷⁰ This kind of theorization of urban space—emphasizing the impermeability of boundaries and the discrete nature of the city’s component parts—has been repeatedly challenged by scholars preferring what Garrett Dash Nelson refers to as a “tapestry” approach: “conceived in terms of links, connections, and blurring rather than bounded, total entities.”⁷¹ Nelson argues that this move from mosaic to tapestry has produced blind spots, such as the spatial character

of administrative boundaries. As Doreen Massey notes, “in this world so often described as a space of flows, so much of our formal democratic politics is organised territorially.”⁷² Nelson proposes that we recognize that geography is both mosaic-like and tapestry-like: “Whether it is treated as a collection of discrete geographic entities or a varying field of edgeless mobile forces is conditioned on history, politics, and ideology as much as it is on the paradoxical qualities of the pattern of the world itself.”⁷³

History, politics, and ideology are especially important when considering the use of mosaic as a metaphor for French society, where it has served primarily in debates about immigration. Two examples illustrate the term’s political uses in France. Described by Nancy Green in 2018 as one of the “crucial founding texts for the field of immigration history in France,”⁷⁴ *La Mosaïque France* (1988) describes the long, ongoing process of redefining the foreigner in the context of successive waves of immigrants to France.⁷⁵ In this positive use of “mosaic” in the title, Yves Lequin presents an image of France that highlights the presence and recognition of diversity. Center-right presidential candidate François Fillon presented another perspective in January of 2017. Speaking in Nice, where the previous July a terrorist had driven a truck through Bastille Day crowds and killed eighty-six people, Fillon stated that if he were elected president, he would reduce immigration to the strict minimum: “France is generous, but it is not a mosaic and a territory without limits.”⁷⁶ In this use of the term, it is the rigid separation of component parts that is most important, and not, as Nelson has noted, that “The togetherness of phenomena is what produces a mosaic, for it binds together interacting entities into a whole.”⁷⁷

We have chosen the term to describe Marseille because it reflects both the presence of distinct, component parts *and* an overarching urban context that brings together those “interacting entities” within a singular whole. We consider it to be useful in understanding aspects of the city beyond immigration and the conditions of the present moment.⁷⁸ Although the term has often been used in a positive way to celebrate cultural diversity—in Canada, especially—it has also been used by scholars offering critical perspectives on urban space in Marseille.⁷⁹ For example, geographers Élisabeth Dorier and Julien Dario note that the number of ERF (*ensembles résidentiels fermés*, or gated communities) has turned Marseille into a “mosaic of gated communities.”⁸⁰ The use of “mosaic” here helps highlight one aspect of a broader trend toward privatization during the Gaudin years. Dorier and Dario suggest that this “mosaic” represents a new norm for the use of urban space and with it a new vision of the city’s identity and future.

The difficulties identified in art historical studies of mosaics can also apply to the mosaic metaphor in urban studies more generally. Just as art historians question the frameworks applied to studies of artistic mosaics, we must also interrogate how the “mosaic myth” is developed and mobilized in relationship to cities such as Marseille.⁸¹ What are the limits of such an analysis? It does not, for one, provide a vocabulary for understanding the intermingling and exchange between and among various populations. It also assumes that each population has a fixed “point” in the city geography that is unmovable. These shortcomings are precisely the points of pressure that our volume interrogates; in short, our contributors consider how and why Marseille’s mythological status as a cosmopolitan Mediterranean city has defined its history as well as current tensions visible today. In what ways is the mosaic metaphor useful, and in what ways does it indicate gaps in contemporary understandings of the city’s social, cultural, and political movements?

Marseille: A Mosaic in Motion?

What constitutes the distinctive identity of the Marseille mosaic? While the authors in this volume are deeply suspicious of assertions of Marseillais “exceptionalism,” they also recognize this theme as a constant presence in national discourse about the city. Indeed, one might say that one factor distinguishing Marseille from other French cities is this ongoing discourse about exceptionalism. Here, our primary concern is not national discussions but rather the field of debate about what Marseille is or should be within the city itself. Our contributors privilege voices in and from Marseille to demonstrate the complexity and depth of thinking about the city by those who know it best, with and against the grain of the many stereotypes in circulation about it.

Our chapters address four interrelated themes. The first section (“The Presence of the Past in Contemporary Marseille”) centers on the history of the city and the implications of this history for the experience and understandings of Marseillais residents today. We do not propose here a comprehensive history of the city but rather a focus on specific moments that highlight aspects of the city’s distinctive identity and its importance within a national narrative about the politics of urban diversity. Examining Marseille’s response to the Great Plague of 1720, Junko Takeda shows how efforts to promote a specifically Marseillais identity were shaped by the city’s transnational economic and political relations abroad—in Asia, the colonies, and other parts of Europe. As with the response to the COVID-19 virus, distinctions between national

and foreign influence in a purely medical context were extended to become meaningful in broader social and political discourse. In her chapter, Kathryn Kleppinger takes a different approach to the “presence of the past” through analysis of the work of a popular author of historical fiction, Jean Contrucci. She focuses on Contrucci’s references to many narratives commonly associated with the city, such as its significant immigrant population or presence of criminality, and shows how his fiction interrogates what such discourses mean for everyday life in Marseille. Ed Naylor’s chapter provides a probing analysis of the conditions in the 1960s and 1970s that led to the current context for housing in the city. Naylor reveals processes shaping the social geography of the city and many of the conflicts and negotiations between municipal government and agents of civil society (such as neighborhood associations).

The second section (“Scenes of Marseille Myth-Making”) examines selected settings today where the public understandings of the city—so often communicated in the myths that sustain national discourse about the city—are engaged, reproduced, and redefined. Anissa Bouayed considers the work of artists from Algeria as a “counter-visibility” that contests the invisibility of the North African presence and legacy in the city. In her chapter, we see not only how a rich world of art by people from Algeria has been ignored or deliberately marginalized but also some of the aesthetic, thematic, and political strategies taken by artists to assert other perspectives. Jean-Christophe Sevin’s chapter explores the complex articulations linking music and politics through consideration of the trajectories of reggae/ragga artists. Sevin’s analysis shows how a local musical scene is linked to an ensemble of circulations and references to other places—whether they be “adopted” places or part of artists’ heritage and origins. Through these reggae/ragga artists we see Marseille as a site of “vernacular” cosmopolitanism, where a musical scene serves as a vector linking local creativity with transnational circulation. Finally, Nicolas Maisetti and Cesare Mattina offer a critical examination of Marseille’s supposed exceptionalism by going beyond clichéd representations in popular culture and the media to address stereotypes in social science scholarship. Navigating between two extremes (an exaggerated exceptionalism and a reductive generic urban identity), Maisetti and Mattina argue for the merits of a comparative approach that illuminates similarity and contrast by considering Marseille’s key features relative to other cities, both within and beyond France.

The third section of the book (“Visibility and Invisibility in Marseille’s Social Fabric”) directs our attention to people and phenomena that are critically important to the internal dynamics of Marseille but are often absent from its most representative myths or distorted in public dis-

course about the city. These chapters are especially attentive to the disconnect between the social geography of the city and how Marseille's urban space is often represented. Vincent Geisser's examination of the place of Islam in Marseille is especially attentive to the diversity hidden by conventional portrayals of the city's religious life. Geisser argues that there is no single Marseille Muslim community but rather a mosaic of groups (of many different national origins) that share a history of marginalization. Geisser's chapter examines the tension and interplay between public representations of Islam—at both the national and local levels—and the real presence of Islam these representations are intended to reference and depict. Chong Bretillon examines the films of Karim Dridi about the distressed “northern neighborhoods” of Marseille and explores how cinema challenges representations that “spatialize” stigmatization by presenting social class, race, and neighborhood as inextricably linked. Her intersectional analysis helps us understand the connections between diverse forms of marginalization and how distinctions between them come to be occluded. Marie Berroir's chapter centers on the political activism of women of postcolonial Algerian immigrant descent and confronts generalizations that reduce these women to a single type, defined greatly through their positioning in and association with disadvantaged neighborhoods. Considering the differential influence of gender, ethnicity, and class on the political engagement of these women, Berroir highlights the women's contribution to innovative forms of collective action within and across these neighborhoods.

The last section (“Current Interventions in Urban Space”) examines the implications of artistic and urbanist projects that engage directly with the city's landscape as a means of shaping a different identity and future for Marseille. Much like during the Marseille-Provence 2013 Capital of Culture year, a critical question at the heart of these projects is the quality and degree of residents' participation. While an overall theme of all the chapters is discourse about the city, the chapters of this last section focus especially on neighborhoods where arts and other interventions are intended to transform social and economic life. In the conflicts about urban space and who determines its uses, we see the negotiation of contested conceptions of Marseille's identity. Nowhere is this clearer than in Marie Beschon's chapter on the vast state-directed Euroméditerrané (Euromed) renovation project. Beschon describes the longstanding conflict between two visions of Marseille's urban core—one affirming the concerns and presence of its many impoverished residents, and one affirming a future with more affluent residents (and the infrastructure and amenities expected to attract them). Beschon shows that in spite of their assertions to the contrary, the urban planners of Euromed are pur-

suing the same goal expressed by former mayor Gaudin in the 1990s of replacing the existing population in the city's center. Élisabeth Dorier's chapter examines two parallel phenomena in Marseille: the steep rise in the construction of gated communities in Marseille that began in 1995, the year Gaudin was elected mayor, and the ongoing municipal neglect of housing in the city center that has led to the direct intervention of the central state. Dorier analyzes the relations between these two phenomena (privatization and segregated social inequality) and the implications of these relations for Marseille's current and future evolution.

In their chapter, Rebecca Free and Mark Ingram examine a different kind of intervention: the public outreach and site-specific (*hors les murs*) work of theatres. While cultural policy analysts often privilege repertoire and in-house audiences, Free and Ingram examine how theatres support associations and help residents address issues of public concern, in part through collaborative works outside theatres, promoting the public nature of sites in the context of "the privatization of urban space" in the city more generally.⁸² In the final chapter, Fabrice Lextrait considers the past, present, and possible future of one of Marseille's most important cultural institutions: la Friche la Belle de Mai. Both as exemplary actor and forum for new ideas, la Friche has been an influential model for the conversion of former industrial sites to centers of arts and culture. Lextrait proposes moving beyond existing models of "arts and entertainment districts" and "creative cities" in order to prioritize social and political aims over purely economic ones. He argues that Marseille today has the ingredients for an exceptional cultural district linking diverse sectors of arts creation with the arts of everyday life.

In 2002, the journal *Méditerranées* published a collection of insightful essays and literary portraits in an issue devoted to Marseille. In the Introduction, Kenneth Brown notes the double meaning of the word *cliché* in French (photographic image and also a stereotype) in order to address "the complicated relationship between received images of Marseille and reality. . . . Seeing Marseille without seeing clichés is almost impossible, but it is what we have attempted here."⁸³ But in fact, the essays in the *Méditerranées* collection examine *both* the clichés and the reality of the city. It is precisely because they highlight the importance of representations of the city that this collection is so valuable: the essays contrast the exaggerations and reductive caricatures of Marseille with real-life conditions there. As Brown notes, there is more to say here than that these images are false—the relationship is "complicated" in ways that merit our attention.

The Marseille Mosaic is also concerned with this complicated relationship between portrayals of Marseille and the lived reality of its

residents. Chapters here allow us to consider aspects of change and continuity in both representation and real life as well as how portrayals of the city contribute to its evolution. A central theme is the play between the mythic representations of the city's identity and the aspects of the life and culture of Marseille neglected in these myths. Our authors examine the conditions that shape stereotypical portrayals of the city and the stakes underlying their mobilization in public discourse. They also examine how discourse about the city's identity manifests in many other settings—in cultural texts such as literature and cinema, but also in engagements with the city's landscape by artists in addition to urban planners. Throughout, our authors are attentive to the ways representations are meaningful and consequential to the dynamics of change in the city. What emerges is a portrait of a divided city that nonetheless exhibits a shared debate about its identity. If the diverse experiences and perspectives of the city come together to constitute a distinct “work”—the Marseille mosaic—it is as a field of shared reference that has always been and continues to be contested and conflicted—Marseille is a contentious work in progress.

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coedited two previous scholarly volumes: *French Cultural Studies for the 21st Century* (with Masha Belenky and Anne O’Neil-Henry, 2017) and *Post-Migratory Cultures in Postcolonial France* (with Laura Reeck, 2018).

Notes

1. “*Marseille: une ville.*” “When one looks at a mosaic, one looks at it up close . . . , one sees stone squares of different colors; one steps back, . . . and what the mosaic represents reveals itself to our eyes. For me, *that* is Marseille; if one looks too closely one will only see the separated squares made up of different colors; when one steps back, one sees the ensemble and the ensemble is magnificent.”
2. Morin, “Bande Organisée.”
3. Estelle, “JuL, SCH.”
4. Estelle, “JuL, SCH.”
5. Lachasse, “Bande Organisée.”
6. Referencing Marseille’s departmental zip code (13000), the album title conveys that, above all, these rappers have come together—organized, even—under a shared geographic reference.
7. “J’suis un enfant des grues, des conteneurs / Mais considère que ce petit lopin de terre nous confédère.” Le Rat Luciano et al., “Je suis Marseille.”
8. “En bande organisée, personne peut nous canaliser.” The refrain itself plays on stereotypes, as the second line completes the rhyme with, “In the ‘hood, we smoke up, tracked by the undercover cars.” [“Dans la zone, ça fume la fusée, pistés par les banalisées.”] By referencing the unmarked cars of the BAC (Brigade anti-criminalités) police force, the rappers underscore how they are perceived by municipal authorities. The video drives home their point with even more clarity: viewers see a group of men dressed in black digging up bags on a beach (presumably in reference to trafficking of illicit items) when suddenly the frame shifts to reveal all eight rappers uncovering their faces to conclude their song. See JuL et al., “Bande Organisée.”
9. Marseille’s legendary football team has attracted national and international attention for its enthusiastic fans. See, for example, Lestrelin, *L’autre public*; Lestrelin, “Depé”; and Bromberger, Hayot, and Mariottini, *Le match*. Cesari, Moreau, and Schleyer-Lindenmann (in “*Plus Marseillais*”) go so far as to cite shared passion for the OM as a unifying factor that helped mitigate the risk of riots when other cities erupted in 2005.
10. Many books have been published on Marseille’s flamboyant history with organized crime and the drug trade, particularly focusing on the mythology surrounding the French Connection heroin trafficking ring. Journalistic accounts include Etchegoin, *Marseille, le roman*; Diefenthal, *Marseille, Capitale*; and Missen, *Marseille Connection*. For academic research on Marseille’s history with the drug trade, see Duport, *L’héroïne à Marseille*; Duport, “La virée”; and Samson, *Marseille en procès*.

11. Rap is now recognized as one of the top selling music genres in France. For research on the national context, see Bouneau, Tobossi, and Behar *Le rap est la musique*; Hammou, *Une histoire de rap*; and Durand, *Hip-Hop en Français*.
12. Many researchers have become interested in the specificities of Marseille-based rap. See, for example, Jacono, “Hip-Hop Music”; Downing, “Rapping French Cities”; Lafargue de Grangeneuve, “Comment Marseille”; or Wojtkowski, “100 Percent Marseillais.”
13. The appeal of reductive stereotypes about Marseille—in the service of discourse about urban and social problems more generally—is evident in the national success of Cédric Jimenez’s 2021 film *Bac Nord*, which takes place in Marseille’s *quartiers nord* and portrays excessively violent conflicts between neighborhood residents and the BAC police squad. Defending the film, Michel Guerrin, a divisional editor at *Le Monde* wrote, “In art, the question is not to decide if the work is true, but if it is accurate (*juste*). And *Bac Nord* resonates with an avalanche of dramatic facts that have made the news over the years.” Guerrin, “‘Bac Nord’ résonne.”
14. Donzel, “L’histoire de Marseille.”
15. Parodi, “Citoyenneté et intégration.”
16. Zalio, “D’impossibles notables?”
17. For analysis of how the “Euro-Mediterranean” themes of the Capital of Culture program were interpreted in ways that privileged certain populations and artistic genres, see Bullen, *European Capitals*. The lack of attention to rap and hip-hop, in particular—in spite of a dynamic local scene—was much criticized (see Arkana, *Marseille, capitale* and “Marseille, capitale de la culture.”).
18. In the last fifteen years, a host of books by investigative journalists have addressed the workings of the “Gaudin system,” and ultimately, the “fall of the monster” (Pujol, *La chute*).
19. “Marseille, capitale de la culture.”
20. For other examples of this type of portrayal of Marseille, see Fitzgerald, “Marseille: A Virtual Tour” and “Episode Intel from Marseille.”
21. Joutard, “Marseille cosmopolite.”
22. For analysis of the interplay between local and national use of the cosmopolitan discourse regarding Marseille, see Çelik Rappas, “Screening Cosmopolitan.”
23. Échinard and Temime, *La préhistoire*, 50.
24. Lopez and Temime, *L’expansion marseillaise*, 5–6.
25. Lopez and Temime, *L’expansion marseillaise*, 38.
26. Attard-Maraninchi and Temime, *Le cosmopolitisme*, 56.
27. Attard-Maraninchi and Temime, *Le cosmopolitisme*, 160.
28. Seghers, *Transit*.
29. Sullivan, *Villa Air-Bel*.
30. Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*.

31. As Jean-Jacques Jordi has noted, “The 1962 repatriation would become the foundational event for a community in exile, a community that had not existed as such in Algeria.” “The Creation of the Pieds-Noirs,” 72.
32. Smith, *Colonial Memory*, 162.
33. As Jordi noted in 2003, “These tensions would structure a memory and forge a collective mentality that persists to this day.” “The Creation of the Pieds-Noir,” 63.
34. Larrochelle, “La fin d’une histoire sans voix.”
35. Of the roughly 650,000 repatriates arriving in France in 1962, nearly 100,000 remained in Marseille, a city of 770,000 at the time. Jordi, “The Creation of the Pieds-Noirs,” 63, 74.
36. Eldridge, *From Empire*; Stora, *La guerre*.
37. Lebovics, “Rashomon on the Mediterranean,” 163.
38. Eldridge, *From Empire*, 1.
39. Eldridge, *From Empire*, 263.
40. Smith, *Colonial Memory*, 231.
41. Derived from the Arabic *harka* to designate military regiments, the *harkis* were native Algerians who fought on the French side during the Algerian war of independence. After the war in Algeria, they were treated as traitors by the ruling FLN (Front de liberation nationale) leaders, so many fled to France and faced other forms of racism and discrimination. Due to its charged history, today the word *harki* is often considered derogatory. See Eldridge, *From Empire*.
42. Gilbert and Vorms, “L’empreinte de la guerre d’Algérie.”
43. Cusin and Hamilton, “Is There a Model,” 93.
44. *Le Monde*, 14 September 1973, cited in Mourlane and Regnard, *Les Batailles*, 56.
45. Gastaut, “Marseille, épicecentre.”
46. Gastaut, “Marseille, 1973,” 50. Ironically, as Gastaut notes, the struggle of immigrant workers in the 1970s to oppose racist violence contributed to shaping the image of a cosmopolitan Marseille by forcing city leaders to make changes in areas such as housing policy. It also led to national attention to the city when President Giscard d’Estaing visited impoverished neighborhoods in 1975 along with the journalists and cameras of the French media.
47. Brahim, “L’antiracisme politique,” 347.
48. Mourlane and Regnard, *Les batailles*.
49. See Ben Mohamed, *La Gachette Facile*, in which Lahouari Ben Mohamed’s brother (who later became a police officer) revisits this case by exploring the broader conditions that led to his brother’s death.
50. “Justice de velours.”
51. Beaud and Maslet, “From the ‘Marchers.’”
52. Nasiali, *Native to the Republic*, 155.
53. While the island of Mayotte is an overseas department of France, the other islands are not part of France.

54. Our point here is to underline the distinctive interplay between local conditions and the city's usefulness in French public discourse, where Marseille as symbol has helped to articulate certain ideas about society (especially regarding immigration and integration), similar to the totemic animals referred to in the oft-cited statement by Lévi-Strauss: "natural species are chosen not because they are 'good to eat' but because they are 'good to think.'" See Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, 89.
55. See also Mucchielli, "Marseille, capitale du crime?"
56. Mallaval, "Michel Peraldi: A Marseille."
57. Sala Pala, "La politique."
58. David, "Une histoire."
59. Cusin and Hamilton, "Is There a Model?"
60. Roncayolo, *Les grammaires*.
61. Cusin and Hamilton, "Is There a Model," 93.
62. Crane, *Mediterranean Crossroads*, 10.
63. Mourlane and Regnard, "Introduction," 8.
64. Cartwright, "Mosaic."
65. As Liz James argues, "In mosaic terms generally, the term 'Byzantine' has been used of (imagined) artists very loosely, with a lack of distinction between presumed ethnicity, nationality (an anachronistic concept in any case) and the physical location of a mosaic, and overlooking that individuals can and did simultaneously occupy more than one position in society. These labels are divisive in a way not relevant to the Middle Ages and are simply not helpful." James, *Mosaics*, np.
66. Molholt, "Roman Labyrinth," 287.
67. James, "Mosaics," np.
68. Pozen, "The Mosaic Theory."
69. Park and Burgess, *The City*, 40.
70. Park and Burgess, *The City*, 94
71. Nelson, "Mosaic and Tapestry," 860–61.
72. Massey, "Geographies of Responsibility," 9. Cited in Nelson, "Mosaic and Tapestry," 863.
73. Nelson, "Mosaic and Tapestry," 866.
74. Green, "Yves Lequin (dir.)."
75. Lequin, *La Mosaïque, France*.
76. Galante, "Presidential Hopeful."
77. Nelson, "Mosaic and Tapestry," 864.
78. For a discussion of Marseille as a "mosaic" and also a "crossroads of different cultures" in terms focused on immigration and city planning for the Marseille Capital of Culture year, see Peysson-Zeiss, "Marseille Provence," 121–22.
79. Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*.
80. Dorier and Dario, "Les espaces," 324.
81. See also Emanuela Guano's discussion of how the "mosaic of cultures" metaphor in Italy "may use the immediacy of sensuous aesthetic experience to

legitimate a static and highly hierarchical representation of culture and society: one where diversity is acceptable only if frozen in time and organized around an undisputed center.” Guano, *Creative Urbanity*, 174.

82. Peraldi and Samson, *Marseille en résistances*.

83. Brown, “Seeing Marseille,” 9.

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