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Paris Branded: Introduction

Throughout history, cities have been contact zones where the past, present and future coexist, where urban and suburban meet and where (im)migrants, ex-patriots, urban explorers, and local inhabitants mix anonymously. Cities not only shape the way in which its inhabitants think about the world, but are also literally and figuratively shaped by those who come into contact with them. This bidirectional dynamic, facilitates the birth of new modes of understanding and of representation. While many writers and artists depict the city, their versions vary considerably as a result of their diverse perspectives. One need only think of the Paris of La Bruyère or that of Walter Benjamin, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Mathieu Kassovitz, or Merzak Allouache; Montaigne's Bordeaux; Stendhal's Grenoble; Assia Djebar or Fatou Diome's Strasbourg; and Azouz Begag's Lyon. The theme of the 2009 conference, the "Branded City," carries a double meaning: first, it references both the city as it has been recorded by artists (writers, painters, illustrators, musicians, architects, etc.) as well as literal and figurative inscriptions on the city, and second, it leads us to investigate the way in which cities function as a "brand." How is the city depicted? How have French and Francophone cities influenced and branded the works of artists from around the world? How has the city been marked and thus shaped, physically or historically by the influx and outflow of people?

Whereas the roundtable discussion, inspired by several conference presentations, sought to think beyond the limits of Paris, this issue of *Paroles gelées* focuses solely on the métropole. In her article "[Modern Transitions in 19th Century Paris: Baudelaire and Renoir](#)," Karen Turman uses close readings of Baudelaire's "À une Passante" and Renoir's *Les parapluies* to examine how the Haussmannization of Paris transformed the individual's interaction with the city, above all through his/her newfound relationship with the anonymous crowd. In "[Petite hantologie du surréalisme: la part de l'ombre de la Ville-Lumière](#)," Ophélie Chavroche examines the spectral side of Paris. Guided by the Derridean pairings of hostis/

hospes and ghost/gheist, she considers the tenuous relationship between Parisian space, its inhabitants, and death in Surrealist texts. In her article [“‘Under a Foreign Sky:’ Place and Displacement in James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room*,”](#) Njelle Hamilton unpacks Baldwin’s complex use of Paris as a site of multiple displacements where heteronormative scripts collapse into a patriotic, American identity and where the foreign elsewhere becomes synonymous with the sexual Other from which the main character flees. In [“Re-Branding Post 1945 Paris: Exhibiting Powers and Contemporary Art,”](#) Elisabeth Tiso offers a succinct but insightful view into France’s post-nineteenth-century art world focusing on how these new projects redefine Paris as a global art center. She examines Paris’s contemporary art expositions such as *Nuit Blanche* and repurposed spaces such as *Espace Centquatre* and *La Fabrique*, paying particular attention to two aspects of these new developments: first, the international composition of the artists and the subsequent redefinition of “French art,” and second the way in which these art projects work alongside larger Parisian unification projects such as Nicolas Sarkozy’s Grand Paris. Katherine Lawrie Van de Ven, in her article [“Spectacular Paris: Representations of Nostalgia and Desire,”](#) uses Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle* to analyze how the city of Paris functioned as a kind of brand in the conceptualization and construction of the Las Vegas casino and hotel of the same name, taking into account two films that debuted two years after the grand opening of Paris Las Vegas, *Le fabuleux destin d’Amélie Poulin* and *Moulin Rouge*, that aid in producing and reinforcing the notion of Paris as a marketable narrative.