

Francophone Poetics in Tension: Intuition, Relation, and Exiguity from Senghor to Canadian Minority Voices

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Abstract

This article explores a dynamic comparative framework between African and Canadian Francophone literatures, focusing on Léopold Sédar Senghor's poetics of intuition and its resonances with minority writing in Canada. By introducing the concept of co-poetics, the essay investigates the aesthetic interplay of rhythm, opacity, and marginality across postcolonial and diasporic contexts. Drawing on the philosophies of Bergson and Glissant, the article analyzes how authors such as Abia Farhoud, France Daigle, and Rodney Saint-Éloi engage with multilingualism, fragmented memory, and the tension between language and identity. Far from forming a unified vision, these literatures articulate dissonance as a creative force and exiguity as an epistemological stance. The result is a plurivocal "poetics of the edge" that redefines Francophone writing beyond national or linguistic centers. This article contributes to postcolonial literary theory by offering co-poetics as a conceptual tool to map intercultural resonances between African and Canadian literary margins.

Keywords: Francophone literatures, Senghor, minority writing, co-poetics, exiguity, postcolonial theory

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Introduction

In the shifting landscapes of postcolonial and minority literatures, questions of epistemology, language, and identity continue to resonate with striking urgency. In the face of global standardization and the epistemic hegemony of Western rationalism, many Francophone writers across Africa and Canada have turned to poetic language not only as a mode of expression but as a form of resistance, reparation, and reinvention. This article proposes to examine how certain literary voices, including Léopold Sédar Senghor and several Francophone writers from minority communities in Canada, construct what may be called *poetics in tension*: literary gestures that challenge dominant paradigms by foregrounding intuition, relationality, and spatial constraint.

While Senghor's work is deeply rooted in the ideals of Négritude and the rehabilitation of African sensibility, many contemporary Franco-Canadian authors, writing from the margins of the linguistic and national imagination, operate within frameworks marked by bilingualism, fragmentation, and survival. Writers such as Ying Chen, Abia Farhoud, and Barthélemy Bolivar do not share a single tradition or geography with Senghor. Yet their works resonate through a shared disruption of epistemological conventions. Both Senghor and these minority authors seek to redefine the place of poetic knowledge in the face of modernity. One pursues this through rhythm and intuition, the others through heterolingual fracture and micro-resistance.

This study places these literatures in dialogue not to impose equivalence, but to illuminate their converging critiques of modernity and their creative reimaginings of what language and literature can be. The work of Édouard Glissant provides a theoretical bridge between these domains. His philosophy of Relation, with its emphasis on opacity, creolization, and errancy, offers a fertile lens through which to understand both Senghor's universalist vision and the exiguous literatures of the Canadian Francophone periphery.

In recent years, the field of comparative Francophone studies has paid increasing attention to transregional dialogues that escape national literary boundaries (Hargreaves & McKinney, 2017; Lionnet & Shih, 2018). Likewise, scholars in minority language studies have highlighted the aesthetic and political dimensions of literary production in contexts of linguistic precarity (Simon, 2021; Dubois & Prizel, 2020). This article builds upon those insights while carving out a path that foregrounds poetics, understood not merely as style or form, but as an epistemological stance and ontological commitment. It contributes a novel framework: a *co-poetics of the margins* that maps aesthetic and epistemological strategies in global Francophone literatures.

Three conceptual axes guide the analysis. First, *intuition* as a mode of access to the world, rehabilitated by Senghor in opposition to Western Cartesian logic. Second, *relation* as theorized by Glissant, not as synthesis or reconciliation, but as an ethics of difference and resonance. Third, *exiguity*, a term popularized by François Paré, to describe the aesthetic and institutional constraints that paradoxically fuel the intensity of minority literary production. These three modes of literary engagement do not represent isolated strategies. They coalesce into what we propose as a shared poetics of dissonance and invention.

Rather than assimilating these distinct literary geographies into a homogenizing framework, the article highlights their divergences as sites of creative and critical power. The tension between Senghor's rhythmic universalism and the fragmented enunciations of Franco-Canadian minorities does not negate dialogue. It generates a dynamic zone of reflection on language, memory, and the body as sites of both violence and possibility.

Methodological Approach: Comparative Poetics and Epistemological Intersections

This study adopts a comparative poetics framework grounded in the intersection of Francophone literary theory, postcolonial epistemology, and minority language aesthetics. It employs a qualitative and interpretive methodology, combining close reading with contextual analysis of primary texts (poetry, theatre, and hybrid forms) by Léopold Sédar Senghor and contemporary authors from Canadian minority and African diasporic literatures.

Drawing on African literary humanism (Ogude, 2019), feminist diasporic critique (Nfah-Abbenyi, 2020), and relational poetics in West African traditions (Kane, 2018), this approach foregrounds fragmentation and opacity not as signs of lack, but as epistemic strengths. Methodological insights are further enriched by the work of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Achille Mbembe, and Édouard Glissant, particularly regarding resistance, rooted universality, and poetics of opacity.

The comparative dimension is rooted in literary hermeneutics, attentive to metaphor, rhythm, intertextuality, and linguistic hybridity. By combining textual exegesis and cultural critique, the article contributes to ongoing debates on bilingual poetics, hybrid identities, and reterritorialized memory. In doing so, it aligns with current approaches to African literatures that advocate multidimensional, transnational readings across languages and borders (Ogude, 2019; Nfah-Abbenyi, 2020). This approach aligns with what Lionnet and Shih (2005) describe as *minor transnationalism*, a method that privileges lateral comparisons among marginal literatures rather than a vertical orientation toward dominant centers

1. Senghor Reconsidered: Intuitive Poetics and Sensitive Epistemologies

The poetic, philosophical, and political project of Léopold Sédar Senghor emerges as one of the most ambitious attempts of the twentieth century to challenge the epistemic hierarchies inherited from Western modernity. At the intersection of aesthetics and politics, Senghor reclaims what had been systematically devalued by colonial rationalism: intuition, rhythm, myth, and affect. His proposition is not simply aesthetic, it is epistemological, ontological, and ethical. Through his writings, especially in *Liberté I* (1964) and *Liberté II* (1971), Senghor articulates a vision of poetry as *co-naissance*: a sensitive, embodied way of knowing that precedes and transcends Cartesian logic.

1.1. The Bergsonian Roots of Intuition

Senghor's intellectual formation, steeped in both classical European and African traditions, found a crucial resonance in the philosophy of Henri Bergson. In *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* and

L'évolution créatrice, Bergson posits *duration (la durée)* as the fundamental mode of real time, fluid, indivisible, and irreducible to spatialized, segmented time. For Bergson (1911), intuition is the faculty that grants access to this lived time, in contrast to the artificial abstractions of rational analysis.

Senghor's appropriation of Bergson is not superficial: he identifies in intuition a revolutionary path for African thought, one that affirms an alternative, embodied relationship to the world. "*La raison nègre-africaine n'est pas discursive*," writes Senghor, "*elle est intuitive par participation, plus proche du sentiment que de l'intelligence*" (Senghor, 1964, p. 18). While this formulation may seem essentialist, it must be read within the broader project of decolonial epistemology, where challenging Western rationality was both a necessity and a strategy for emancipation. Affect, rhythm, and spirit—historically excluded from Enlightenment thought—are repositioned at the heart of Senghor's poetic logic. He further writes: "*L'émotion est un mode de connaissance tout aussi valable que la raison : elle est connaissance par participation, par sympathie*" (*Liberté II*, p. 15). This view resonates with Bergsonian intuition, but it also reframes it within an African cosmology where feeling and relationality become valid forms of knowing. Senghor's epistemological model unsettles the dualism of reason and emotion, proposing instead a unified sensorium in which aesthetics and ethics converge.

The notion of **co-naissance**, a neologism coined by Senghor, extends this epistemology further. Literally meaning "co-birth," it evokes a shared emergence of knowledge—between subject and world, self and other. This is not knowledge from above, nor from a detached distance, but one born of immersion and resonance. The poet, in this framework, becomes not an observer but a seismograph of collective affect. *Co-naissance* thus aligns with an ontological openness that privileges participation over mastery, rhythm over structure, and sensitivity over abstraction.

1.2. Rhythm as the Architecture of Being

Senghor's oft-quoted claim that "rhythm is the architecture of being" (Senghor, 1971, p. 104) is not a poetic metaphor but a metaphysical affirmation. Rhythm, for him, is the manifestation of the vital force that animates all life. It is the expressive pulse of being, the very form of its unfolding. Influenced by Bergson but also by African cosmologies, Senghor locates rhythm not merely in poetry, but in dance, speech, ritual, and breath. It is the connective tissue between body, memory, and cosmos.

This conception of rhythm becomes a means of resisting the fragmentation imposed by colonial languages and epistemologies. Against the rigidity of Cartesian grammar, Senghor proposes a poetics of breath, of cadence, of sonority. Language must return to the body, and poetry becomes the privileged site of this re-embodiment. As Shanna Mumm (2018) observes, Senghor's so-called "Revolution of 1889" symbolizes the awakening of this poetic twentieth century, where rhythm and intuition displace sterile analysis as the primary means of accessing the real.

The poet's task, then, is to *vibrate* with the world, to capture the movements of being that escape the net of conceptual reason. Poetry is not ornamental, but revelatory. It unveils what rational discourse occludes, and it does so through a language that sings, dances, and touches.

1.3. Senghor and the Négritude Triad: Between Unity and Divergence

While Senghor remains one of the central figures of the Négritude movement, his vision of poetic knowledge and cultural métissage must be situated alongside those of his contemporaries, Aimé Césaire and Léon-Gontran Damas. The Négritude project, emerging in the interwar period, sought to reclaim Black identity and cultural heritage in the face of colonial degradation. However, its internal tensions are revealing.

Césaire, in his *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939), embraces a surrealist aesthetics that channels revolt, rupture, and the volcanic eruption of suppressed memory. For Césaire, poetry is a weapon, a means of radical insurrection against colonial violence. While he shares with Senghor a valorization of African heritage, his tone is more incendiary, less conciliatory. "I am not of those who nurse their rancor," writes Césaire, "but I do not forget the outrages." His poetics is one of trauma and resistance, not harmony.

Damas, on the other hand, brings a sardonic, urban, jazz-inflected sensibility to the movement. His *Pigments* (1937) speaks with the voice of dissonance, rupture, and alienation. His style—elliptical, syncopated, ironic—embodies a counterpoint to Senghor's lyricism. Damas's vision of Black identity is fractured,

ambivalent, and deeply modern.

In contrast, Senghor's universalism, grounded in Catholic humanism and French republican ideals, seeks reconciliation. His dream of a "civilization of the universal" entails a *métissage* of cultures that preserves difference while aiming at a higher synthesis. This vision, while generous, has been critiqued for its naiveté and its latent assimilationism.

1.4. Glissant's Critique: From Transparency to Opacity

Édouard Glissant's *Poétique de la Relation* (1990) offers a powerful critique and continuation of Senghor's project. While acknowledging Senghor's pioneering role in revalorizing African aesthetics, Glissant refuses the transparent universalism that underpins Senghor's *métissage*. For Glissant, the world is not a harmonious totality to be reconciled, but a turbulent ensemble of relations, opaque, unpredictable, and irreducible.

Glissant's *opacity* stands as a response to the colonial desire for transparency, the will to classify, define, and know the Other in reductive terms. "To demand transparency," he writes, "is to refuse the right to opacity" (Glissant, 1990, p. 207). Opacity, by contrast, honors the unknowable, the irreducible singularity of each culture and individual. It is a principle of respect, of ethical distance. As Apter (2013) argues, untranslatability is not failure but resistance. In this light, opacity becomes a critical modality rather than a hermeneutic limit.

In this light, Senghor's *co-naissance* is reinterpreted not as a final synthesis but as an ongoing negotiation. Relation, in Glissant's terms, does not aim for resolution but for resonance. It accepts contradiction, embraces ambiguity, and resists totalizing narratives. It is precisely this ethos that informs many contemporary minority and diasporic literatures, including those from Franco-Canadian contexts.

1.5. Toward a Sensitive Epistemology

Senghor's poetic intuition, despite its limitations, remains a vital contribution to postcolonial thought. It challenges the dominance of logocentric reason and affirms alternative modes of knowing rooted in the body, the voice, the rhythm of life. In a world increasingly dominated by technocratic rationality, the urgency of such an epistemology cannot be overstated.

Moreover, the tensions within the Négritude movement (between Senghor's synthesis and Césaire's revolt, between Damas's irony and Glissant's opacity) reflect the complexity of postcolonial identity and its literary expressions. These tensions are not weaknesses but signs of vitality, indicating that the search for identity is always provisional, always negotiated.

Today, as minority literatures continue to interrogate the legitimacy of dominant languages, histories, and epistemes, Senghor's call to *feel the world*, to *sing it*, rather than to dominate it, finds new resonance. His poetics of rhythm and intuition opens a space for sensitivity, memory, and embodied thought, what could be termed a *poetic epistemology*. The term *poetic epistemology* here designates a specific modality of what Senghor envisions as a broader *sensitive epistemology*, one in which poetic form becomes the privileged vehicle for embodied, intuitive, and relational ways of knowing.

This epistemology, while rooted in African cosmologies and aesthetics, speaks beyond Africa. It informs contemporary literary movements in the Caribbean, the Americas, and the Francophone margins of Canada. From this perspective, Senghor is not only a historical figure, but a living interlocutor in the global conversation on decolonization, poetry, and the future of knowledge.

II. Minoritized Francophonies in Canada: A Poetics of Exiguity

While Senghor articulates a pan-African aesthetic grounded in intuition and *métissage*, several Franco-Canadian writers adopt a poetics forged in exiguity, what François Paré (1992) famously described as "aesthetic constraint in minor literatures." In a context of linguistic minoritization, particularly in provinces like Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick, these authors navigate the tensions of writing in French within an Anglophone-dominant environment. Exiguity, in this sense, is not a lack but a form of resistance, a poetics of scarcity transformed into expressive density. These poetics recall Deleuze and Guattari's (1986) notion of

a ‘minor literature’, where language is deterritorialized, politics immanent, and enunciation collective.

Paré (2003) redefines marginality not as a deficit but as a productive condition. He writes: “To inhabit the narrow space is to invest in discontinuity, to multiply tensions into polyphonic meaning” (p. 37). In Franco-Canadian literature, especially among writers such as Abia Farhoud, Ying Chen, and Marguerite Andersen, the constrained space of language becomes a crucible of invention. Their works mobilize fragmentary syntax, hybrid diction, and oral rhythms to craft a literary voice that defies dominant norms while exposing the fragility and resilience of minority identity.

A. Exiguity as Creative Constraint: From Theory to Form

Minority literatures in Canada are marked by their formal experimentation. The constraint of writing in French within an anglophone-majority environment breeds hybrid structures, fragmented syntax, and digressive rhythms. Herménégilde Chiasson’s poetry, for instance, stages the very impossibility of linear discourse: in *Béatitudes*, biblical cadences and colloquial speech collide, producing an unstable, vibrant idiom. Chiasson’s use of white space and visual silence evokes the unspoken history of Acadian exile and displacement. Similarly, France Daigle’s *Pas pire* (1998) foregrounds the Chiac vernacular of New Brunswick, a creolized French-English hybrid often stigmatized. Through Chiac, Daigle elevates local speech into literary dignity, capturing linguistic improvisation as both resistance and cultural affirmation.

Hugues Beaudoin-Dumouchel, a Franco-Ontarian poet and critic, describes his own poetics as one of “slow erosion,” where the lyric voice surrenders to fracture. In *La nuit avec Nelligan*, he explores the impossibility of anchoring the self in a single language: “Ce que je dis en français semble s’enfuir par la bouche.” His verse enacts linguistic dislocation as affective dissonance. Language trembles, retreats, re-emerges, no longer as a transparent tool of communication but as a haunted medium, layered with memory and rupture.

These works echo Glissant’s notion of *opacity* (1990), in which meaning resists full illumination. Exiguity is not only spatial, it is also semantic: it produces voices that whisper rather than declare, fragment rather than unify. In this way, Francophone minority literature in Canada aligns with postcolonial aesthetics of discontinuity, where the silences are as loud as the words spoken.

B. Women’s Voices and the Politics of Orality

The experience of linguistic exiguity intersects crucially with gender. Female Francophone writers in minority contexts often operate at a double margin, linguistically and socially. Their texts foreground *oralité* not only as a stylistic feature but as a site of embodied resistance. Abia Farhoud’s *Le bonheur a la queue glissante* (1998) stages a dialogic narrative where French, Arabic, joual, and English intermingle. This heterolingualism is not a literary device, it is the lived reality of a voice that does not belong wholly anywhere, yet vibrates with plurality. Farhoud’s characters speak in breath, stammering, laughter, and prayer. Her novel reveals language as a skin: porous, fragile, and marked by ancestral tension.

Marguerite Andersen, whose work often engages autobiographical themes, deploys silence and ellipsis as rhetorical acts. In *Le figuier sur le toit* (2005), her protagonist struggles with memory as much as with language. The syntax is fractured, the narrative voice interrupted by hesitations, non-sequiturs, and whispered pain. Andersen’s use of literary discontinuity performs the trauma of dislocation, between countries, tongues, and histories. Her prose echoes what Foucault (1969) called the “distance of writing”: a space where language no longer mirrors the world but breaks it open.

France Daigle also mobilizes feminine subjectivity through local speech. In *Petites difficultés d’existence* (2002), she chronicles women’s everyday lives through fragmented monologues, weather reports, and domestic musings. Her prose blurs the line between banality and transcendence, asserting the narrative power of those long relegated to the background. Through digression, repetition, and spoken cadences, Daigle turns the domestic into a site of epistemological resistance.

C. Territory, Education, and the Rewriting of Place

Francophone minority writers in Canada often inscribe place as both a memory and a battleground. The question of school, long a site of linguistic assimilation, is recurrent. In Chiasson’s *Clémence* (2009), a young

girl's experience in a French-language school becomes a microcosm of broader sociolinguistic struggles. The classroom is not merely pedagogical, it is political. To speak French is to enact resistance, to affirm an identity threatened by erosion. The student's hesitant speech is a declaration of belonging.

The rural landscapes of New Brunswick, so vividly present in Daigle's work, are marked by seasonal rhythms, linguistic sedimentation, and slow loss. Her characters walk fields and streets imbued with the ghost of languages past. Paré's assertion that "in the exiguous space, the collective subject reappears through echoes" (2003) is manifest in these texts: the terrain is alive with stories not institutionalized, but remembered through gesture, repetition, and song.

These writers participate in what Chiasson has called a *géopoétique de la survivance*: a way of inhabiting the land through fragile speech. The landscape is not backdrop, it is interlocutor. It speaks in weather, in dialect, in the names of rivers and roads. The school, the home, the church, each becomes a site where linguistic memory is contested, sometimes lost, sometimes reclaimed.

D. Multilingualism, Fragmentation and Literary Ethics

Many contemporary Francophone writers in Canada, regardless of their region, experiment with multilingualism not as exotic flourish, but as ontological condition. Ying Chen's *L'Ingratitude* (1995), while not written in a Franco-Canadian context, resonates deeply with themes of language estrangement and cultural liminality. Her protagonist exists in-between: between French and Mandarin, memory and forgetting, mother and institution. Language becomes unbearable and necessary, a contradiction that drives the novel's tension.

This liminality is echoed in Beaudoin-Dumouchel's poetic practice, where English interrupts the French text, not as colonizer's tongue, but as spectral intrusion. The instability of form reflects the instability of cultural positioning. These authors write from a space of linguistic vertigo: they affirm the right to speak in tongues, to hesitate, to err.

What emerges from these works is not a literature of complaint or nostalgia. Rather, it is a poetics of tension, between languages, between subjects, between memories. The Franco-Canadian minority literatures offer a space where opacity is not a flaw, but a method. Where the minor is not marginal, but intensely aware.

Paré's exiguity, Glissant's opacity, Farhoud's trembling, all converge in a literary ethic rooted in fragility, defiance, and invention. These are not isolated voices but participants in a broader dialogue on language and survival. Their work urges us to reconsider what it means to write in a language not fully one's own, to speak from a land that has always belonged to others, and to create meaning from within the cracks.

III. Glissant and the Poetics of Relation: A Transformative Mediation

Édouard Glissant's work offers a vital mediating lens through which we may revisit and reconfigure the poetics of Léopold Sédar Senghor and those of Franco-Canadian minority writers. His concept of *Relation*, formulated most fully in *Poétique de la Relation* (1990), opens a space for thinking identity and language not as closed systems but as open-ended, unpredictable encounters. Glissant breaks with the quest for rooted identity to propose instead a poetics of opacity, unpredictability, and multiplicity. This shift moves us from essentialist categories of belonging to a world conceived in terms of traces, crossings, and dynamic affiliations.

Glissant critiques the universalizing tendencies of earlier postcolonial humanisms, such as Senghor's vision of a "civilization of the universal." While Senghor's ideal is rooted in a reconciliatory humanism based on rhythm and intuitive knowledge, Glissant insists on the irreducibility of cultural difference and the ethical imperative to respect "l'opacité", the right not to be fully known or translated. Where Senghor speaks of "co-naissance," or shared birth in intuition and rhythm, Glissant counters with "Relation," which privileges interdependence without fusion, connection without reduction.

As he writes: "La pensée de l'Un est totalitaire. La pensée de la Relation est ouverte." (Glissant, 1990, p. 205). In this respect, Relation is not only an epistemological tool but a political gesture: it demands a pluralism of perspectives and voices, particularly those excluded from dominant discourses.

A. From Négritude to Relation: Fracturing the Universal

Senghor's Négritude movement, inspired by a blend of Marxism, surrealism, and Bergsonian intuitionism, aimed to retrieve African identity and dignity through a shared Black cultural consciousness. This cultural poetics was rooted in rhythm, metaphor, and the "primordial" role of the body and intuition. Senghor valorized African epistemologies as sensual, non-cartesian, affective modes of knowing.

Glissant admired Senghor's efforts to elevate African culture, but he took issue with what he saw as a too-integrated, conciliatory view of identity. Senghor, for instance, imagined a dialectical synthesis between Africa and Europe. In contrast, Glissant sought not synthesis, but irreducible coexistence: the possibility for cultures to exist together without needing to resolve or explain one another. As Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Glissant would later write in *Éloge de la créolité* (1989), "Our identity is not only becoming, it is a relation."

This transition, from universalism to Relation, is not merely philosophical, but aesthetic and political. It entails moving away from the search for a master narrative or stable origin toward a poetics that accommodates fragmentation, multivocality, and creolization. In this way, Glissant's work anticipates contemporary debates on decoloniality, multilingualism, and intersectionality. As Michael Dash observes, "Glissant's Relation is a counter-model to globalization: it is rooted in entanglement rather than domination, in opacity rather than transparency" (Dash, 2006).

B. Relation and Minority Literatures: An Ethics of Dissonance

Glissant's thought has found powerful resonance in minoritized Francophone literatures, particularly in Canada, where writers often negotiate complex dynamics of language loss, cultural fragmentation, and diasporic memory. His notion of "opacity" is especially useful for understanding texts that resist easy translation or assimilation, texts that inhabit linguistic dissonance rather than seek resolution.

In works by Abia Farhoud, Herménégilde Chiasson, and Ying Chen, we see how *Relation* plays out at both a formal and thematic level. Farhoud's interweaving of Arabic, French, English and joul mirrors Glissant's vision of language as relational, porous, and hybrid. Chen's prose resists narrative closure and linguistic uniformity, preferring instead a fragmented form that speaks to exile, silence, and partial presence. These authors exemplify what Glissant calls a "poétique du tremblement", a poetics of trembling, where meaning is always in flux.

Moreover, Glissant's *Relation* offers a useful framework for re-reading the works of contemporary Franco-Manitoban writers such as Hugues Beaudoin-Dumouchel and J. R. Léveillé. Their poetics reject normative grammatical and discursive structures in favor of open-ended, polyphonic forms. In this, they echo Glissant's assertion that writing from the periphery can generate new modes of thinking: "Les périphéries pensent aussi le monde" (Glissant, 1990, p. 153). Their marginal position is not a deficit but a generative space where language reconfigures itself.

The politics of Relation also emerges in the thematic treatment of memory and trauma. In Canadian minority literatures, memory is often unstable, carried through gesture, song, or silence rather than formal archive. This "memory without monument" (to borrow a phrase from Marianne Hirsch) aligns with Glissant's vision of non-totalizing historiography, a history told in fragments, shadows, and murmurs. Here again, opacity becomes a method: not a failure of clarity, but a strategy of survival.

C. Creolization, Multilingualism, and the Ethics of Opacity

Central to Glissant's thought is the concept of *créolisation*, the unpredictable, non-linear mixing of languages, cultures, and identities. Unlike métissage, which implies a more harmonious blending, creolization is chaotic, incomplete, and open-ended. This idea is essential to understanding how minority writers in Canada engage with the French language, not as a pure inheritance, but as a contested and re-invented medium.

Authors like France Daigle and France Cayouette, for instance, explore the tension between standard French and regional vernaculars like chiac or joul. In these texts, language carries both the burden of

normativity and the joy of subversion. As Daigle once noted, “writing in chiac is not about authenticity, but about possibility.” This resonates deeply with Glissant’s claim that creolization is not about origins, but about unpredictable relations: “Ce qui est important, c’est ce que devient la chose, non ce qu’elle était” (Glissant, 1990, p. 206).

From an aesthetic standpoint, the use of multilingual syntax, disjunctive rhythms, and hybrid imagery in these works is not ornamental, it is structural. It reflects an ethical commitment to the complexity of lived experience in minority settings. Glissant’s refusal of linguistic purity thus becomes a tool for writers who must navigate multiple linguistic allegiances, none of which offer complete belonging.

Moreover, his emphasis on “opacity” counters the dominant logic of visibility and translation that often governs minority representation. To be opaque, in Glissant’s sense, is to resist appropriation; it is to assert the right to remain misunderstood, unclassifiable. This concept is particularly relevant to women writers from diasporic communities, who often find themselves overexposed in dominant discourses, turned into symbols rather than subjects. The ethics of opacity demands a different mode of reading, one that respects silence, indirection, and refusal.

D. Writing the World from the Periphery

Glissant’s insistence that “les périphéries pensent le monde” is perhaps one of his most radical contributions to literary and philosophical thought. It reframes marginality not as lack but as epistemological potential. Franco-Canadian minority literatures, often confined to regional circuits, embody this claim by producing world-thinking from local tension. Their rootedness in contested territories, whether Acadian, Franco-Ontarian, or Métis, does not preclude relationality; rather, it enables it.

This repositioning is not only thematic but formal. These texts often reject linear narrative in favor of fragment, echo, drift, modes that correspond to what Glissant calls a “rhizomatic” structure. Like creolization, the rhizome spreads without a clear origin or destination, privileging multiplicity over unity. In this way, Franco-Canadian minority writing participates in what Glissant imagined as a global *poétique de la Relation*, a literature without center, without purity, without finality.

Finally, Glissant’s model provides tools for negotiating the tension between exiguity and relation. While Paré emphasizes spatial and institutional constraint, Glissant invites us to think beyond spatial metaphors, toward networks, affects, and vibrations. The result is a potential synthesis, not a merger, but a resonance, between two visions of minority poetics: one grounded in survival within limits, the other in expansion through relation.

Glissant’s thought bridges the epistemological idealism of Senghor and the pragmatic survival poetics of Canadian minority writers. His *Poétique de la Relation* offers a conceptual grammar for understanding how minoritized subjects re-invent language, memory, and belonging outside dominant paradigms. Through creolization, opacity, and trembling, Glissant proposes a poetics that is both radically ethical and aesthetically generative.

In the interplay between Senghor’s intuitive rhythm and Paré’s exiguous condensation, Glissant introduces a third path: not fusion, but resonance; not universality, but relation. His work reminds us that literary marginality is not a symptom but a method, a way of thinking, writing, and being in the world that resists mastery and embraces multiplicity.

IV. Contemporary Figures of Co-Naissance: Intersections and Reterritorializations

This section traces how Senghor’s concept of *co-naissance*, originally defined as a shared, sensitive communion with the world, is revisited, challenged, and reterritorialized by contemporary authors. What began as a poetic ideal of unity is transformed into a more fragmented, diasporic, and dissonant epistemology shaped by exile, rupture, and linguistic instability. The poetics of co-naissance, originally elaborated by Léopold Sédar Senghor as an intuitive communion between the self and the world, finds renewed resonance in the works of contemporary writers navigating linguistic, cultural, and existential multiplicity. In this final section, we trace how Senghor’s legacy, his insistence on rhythm, feeling, and affective knowledge, re-emerges, is challenged, and is reterritorialized in modern diasporic and minoritized contexts. These new

figures of co-naissance write from the fractures of memory and the thresholds of language, drawing lines of force between Africa and its diasporas, between poetic intuition and political urgency.

A. From *L'Ingratitude* to *Élégie*: Intuition and Loss Revisited

A compelling site of comparison lies between Senghor's lyrical meditations on loss and communion in *Élégies majeures* (particularly "Élégie pour la femme de mon père"), and Ying Chen's *L'Ingratitude* (1995), a Franco-Canadian novel that performs an affective dislocation of the self. While Chen's narrative structure resists Senghor's rhythmic consistency, both texts are animated by the urgency to articulate absence, to name what resists naming.

In "Élégie pour la femme de mon père," Senghor addresses the dead in a language saturated with reverence, sorrow, and rhythm. The poetic voice invokes African cosmogony, Catholic imagery, and personal myth, weaving together affect and ancestry. The loss of the mother figure becomes a site of ontological reflection and spiritual reconnection: "J'ai chanté le tam-tam de mon cœur, à ton âme revenue." The use of repetition and musical cadence aims not only to mourn but to reestablish relationality beyond death.

In *L'Ingratitude*, the protagonist communicates with her mother in silence, through the inner monologue of a suicide note. The novel unfolds in a fragmented style, refusing chronological development. If Senghor's co-naissance is luminous and reconciling, Chen's is ambivalent and disrupted. The daughter's rejection of the mother figure does not preclude a profound affective tie, it merely displaces it into tension. The French language, for Chen, becomes a site of exile and survival, mirroring the protagonist's alienation from both her cultural past and present. She writes: "Je m'écris en une langue qui m'éloigne." Where Senghor reaches for reconstitution, Chen settles in irreparability. Yet both texts perform the act of poetic witnessing, grounding grief in language that exceeds rationality.

B. Rodney Saint-Éloi and the Geography of Fractured Memory

A key figure in contemporary Haitian-Canadian literature, Rodney Saint-Éloi reinvents the poetic terrain of co-naissance by anchoring it in a diasporic cartography of memory and resistance. His collection *Je suis la fille du baobab brûlé* (2015) stages a multi-voiced and multigenerational dialogue that reclaims female genealogies and ancestral memory in the face of colonial erasure and migration. Although framed as a prose poem, the book mobilizes formal strategies akin to orality: repetition, address, invocation, fragmentation.

Saint-Éloi's writing echoes Senghor's in its use of African symbols, especially the baobab as a metaphor of rootedness and resistance. Yet, while Senghor idealizes the baobab as a sheltering, maternal presence, Saint-Éloi exposes its burning, its violence, its impossibility as home. The daughter-figure in the text becomes the bearer of memory, not as continuity, but as rupture and testimony. She speaks: "Je viens d'un pays qu'on a brûlé, d'un arbre qu'on a tué, d'une mère qu'on a crucifiée." This lineage of brokenness does not deny relation; rather, it reconfigures it in diasporic terms.

Glissant's notion of *Relation* is palpably at work in Saint-Éloi's practice. The poetic voice navigates between Haitian Creole, French, and diasporic affect, without ever collapsing into totalizing identity. Co-naissance, here, is not an original birth but a continuous becoming, performed through linguistic syncretism and narrative interruption.

C. Multilingualism and the Ethics of Displacement

Multilingualism plays a central role in how contemporary writers reimagine co-naissance. If Senghor saw rhythm and metaphor as tools for revealing the African soul, contemporary diasporic authors often expose rhythm to fracture, stutter, and dissonance. In their works, multilingualism is not merely thematic but structural. It shapes syntax, interrupts flow, and invokes languages as both ghosts and thresholds.

Bathélemy Bolivar, a Haitian-born poet residing in Canada, offers a compelling example of linguistic and cultural reterritorialization. His poetry, infused with Creole, French, and occasional English insertions, deconstructs the very idea of a stable mother tongue. In *Tempo*, he writes: "*je suis à haute température / prêt à brûler le temps qui s'évapore*" (Bolivar, 2016, p. 38). Language, in Bolivar's work, is not a heritage to be preserved, but a volatile force, resistant to fixity, estranged from linear time, and vibrating with loss. Naming

becomes a trembling, an act of fragile embodiment. His elliptical grammar and hybrid lexicon enact what Glissant (1990) called the “right to opacity.” Within this horizon, *co-naissance* is not a return to lost origins, but the survival of dispersed fragments, a poetics of liminality and tension. Senghor’s vision of universal poetic unity offers a poignant counterpoint. “Le monde est un arbre immense dont chaque homme, chaque race est une feuille ou une fleur,” he writes (*Liberté II*, p. 28). This organic metaphor, though essentialist in tone, anticipates later notions of rhizomatic identity and *Relation*. It finds renewed resonance in diasporic voices like Bolivar, whose fractured French becomes not disintegration, but a mode of resilience.

Similarly, Blaise Ndala — Congolese-Canadian novelist and satirist — engages *co-naissance* as ethical dissonance. In *Sans capote ni kalachnikov* (2016), he weaves French, Lingala, and globalized idioms to critique humanitarian hypocrisy and Western commodification of African trauma. His tone is ironic, his structure intertextual and layered. While far from Senghor’s lyrical universalism, Ndala’s investment in memory, betrayal, and the politics of voice from the margins articulates a fierce, contemporary variant of relational poetics.

Bertrand Nayet’s *Sous les tilleuls* (2020), a theatrical work that blends poetic language with political tension, offers another dimension of *co-naissance* in a minoritized Francophone context. The play follows a journalist and documentary filmmaker attempting to retrieve the body of her brother, who was killed after committing a terrorist act. Caught in a bureaucratic and moral labyrinth, she navigates institutional opacity, personal grief, and the ambiguous demands of state authorities.

While not a poem in form, the play resonates with poetic cadences and rhetorical fragmentation. Silence and evasion operate as modes of resistance, mirroring the fractured relationship between language, memory, and power. The language is at once intimate and elusive, weaving themes of familial loyalty, violence, political entrapment, and buried truth. As with Bolivar or Farhoud, the instability of discourse becomes central. In *Sous les tilleuls*, the act of speaking—or refusing to speak—becomes a performative strategy for negotiating identity and reclaiming agency amid structural silencing.

The play participates fully in a *poétique de la co-naissance*, not through lyrical exaltation, but through dramaturgical tension, hesitation, and ethical opacity. Language, in this context, is not a tool of clarity but of survival, marked by ellipses, negotiations, and gestures that resist full legibility.

D. Writing from the Border: Memory as Fragment and Invention

Contemporary minoritized writers do not inherit *co-naissance* as a fixed tradition, they reinvent it from the edges. Their voices emerge not from a unified collective, but from plural genealogies, uncertain homes, and unstable memories. *The fractured temporalities of diasporic memory explored in Farhoud and Saint-Éloi resonate with Stuart Hall’s (1990) description of cultural identity as “a matter of becoming as well as of being”*. In this sense, they are border-writers (écrivains-frontières), who, as Lionel Ruffel suggests, operate “in a condition of epistemological displacement.”

This is particularly evident in the works of Hugues Beaudoin-Dumouchel, who articulates a melancholic relation to the French language in his long-form poem *La nuit avec Nelligan*. The speaker moves through memories, half-formed images, and phantom presences. The rhythm is staccato, reflective of a subject trying to hold on to a language that escapes. In lines like “La syntaxe m’abandonne mais je t’écis encore,” we hear an echo of Senghor’s belief in the saving power of poetic address, but also a radical shift: *co-naissance* has become solitude, an effort to speak into the void.

What emerges across these contemporary texts is a renewed ethics of writing, one that refuses linguistic purity, embraces aesthetic multiplicity, and acknowledges the political stakes of speech. These writers articulate a *co-naissance* not of origins, but of crossings. They do not seek to reclaim a lost past, but to inhabit the disjunctions of the present. Their language is intuitive but also critically aware. It weaves memory and fiction, body and syntax, homeland and exile, in a poetics that is both rooted and deterritorialized. Senghor’s legacy is neither rejected nor repeated, it is fractured, carried forward in new forms, and transformed through contact.

In the works of Bolivar, Saint-Éloi, Chen, Ndala, and Beaudoin-Dumouchel, we witness the evolution of Senghor’s poetics into new idioms. Their writing resists totality, affirms multiplicity, and embraces the

complexity of diasporic being. Theirs is a co-naissance of exile and return, of opacity and resonance, of rhythm and interruption. While Senghor's vision was grounded in metaphysical harmony, these contemporary authors dwell in historical dissonance. Yet they remain, in a deeper sense, his poetic descendants: committed to language as a site of ethical relation and imaginative renewal. Their voices echo across the borders of languages and nations, bearing witness to the power of literature to hold contradiction, to survive silence, and to invent the self anew.

Conclusion: Toward a Co-Poetics of the Margins

This study has proposed a traversal of aesthetic fault lines, from Senghor's intuitive rhythm and epistemology of the sensitive, to the Franco-Canadian exiguity anchored in linguistic precarity, to Glissant's Relation as a cosmopoetic force of opacity. What emerges from this constellation is neither a convergence nor a hierarchy of traditions, but a resonant field, a dynamic interplay of forms and voices writing from the edges, not toward the center, but toward one another.

Across geographies, epochs, and diasporic displacements, these literatures assert themselves as minor without being minoritarian. They do not seek validation from hegemonic frameworks; instead, they draw strength from a poetics rooted in tension, rupture, and non-belonging. Senghor, Glissant, Paré, Daigle, Farhoud, Bolivar, and Nayet write from distinct zones of alterity, yet their works are bound by an insistence on the irreducibility of language and experience.

What unites these writers is not shared origin but a common refusal: of normative legibility, linguistic flattening, and epistemic assimilation. In response, they cultivate what we have termed a co-poetics of the margins—an aesthetic and philosophical stance grounded in adjacency rather than synthesis. It does not aim to unify difference, but to co-inhabit it, allowing distinct rhythms and temporalities to resonate in proximity.

This notion draws from three main dimensions. First, intuition as epistemological gesture, following Senghor and Bergson, recovers ways of knowing repressed by rationalist traditions, including memory, embodiment, and the unseen. Second, exiguity as aesthetic practice, through Paré and minority Francophone literatures, embraces constraint not as lack but as possibility. Fragmentation becomes structure, silence becomes form, and language seeks not to dominate but to endure. Third, Relation as cosmopoetic horizon, according to Glissant, offers a vision of interconnection without dilution, privileging opacity over transparency, echo over translation, presence over integration.

Together, these elements outline a model of literary creation that displaces centrality without seeking to replace it. The co-poetics of the margins suggests that literature born of tension — between languages, histories, and ontologies — offers not only resistance, but proposals. These are literatures of tremor and murmur, of fracture as form. As recent research affirms, African and diasporic literatures must be read outside national or linguistic silos, favouring fluid affiliations, partial inheritances, and relational solidarities (Ogude, 2019; Kane, 2018).

This approach also reframes the act of comparison. Instead of aiming for equivalence, the comparatist gesture becomes a resonant juxtaposition. This co-poetics does not strive toward a global synthesis. Rather, it engages what Saussy (2006) calls a comparative practice adequate to the plurality of global literary positions.

The co-poetics of the margins, as proposed here, is more than descriptive; it is a critical tool for interpreting literary production shaped by displacement and multilingual precarity. It is transposable and adaptable to other contexts marked by relational fragmentation. It invites attention to the multilingualism of lived experience, to the interstices of memory, and to the embodied knowledge of exile. Instead of seeking universalism, it privileges partial affiliation, interrupted lineage, and singular opacity. It asks us to listen to languages that tremble, to silences that remember, to cadences that resist domestication.

Such poetics have both ethical and political stakes. They reject the commodification of difference, the reduction of "diverse" literatures to festival soundbites or marketing categories. These works do not ask to be celebrated, but to be read—closely, slowly, attentively—acknowledging their fractured beauty and linguistic courage.

This opens toward a transnational horizon. As borders blur, and identities, languages, and affiliations circulate across diasporas and platforms, the idea of a literary center becomes less viable, and more exclusionary. What is needed is not a new center, but a constellation of voices—polyphonic, proximate, dissonant. The future of Francophone poetics, we propose, will not lie in unification or reterritorialization, but in co-naissances: shared beginnings, collaborative acts of knowing, and mutual ruptures. These literatures may not follow the same paths, but they share a gesture: that of inventing against silence, speaking from the fissures, and claiming literature not as homeland, but as act.

To close, we do not offer a synthesis, but a wager: that the co-poetics of the margins may become a needed framework for twenty-first century literary thought. It calls for attentiveness, for a critical ethics of proximity, and for the courage to dwell in the interval between voices that neither merge nor erase.

It is not a new theory of literature: it is an invitation to listen.

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