

# **Paris in the Americas**

Yesterday and Today

Edited by  
**Carole Salmon**  
Furman University

**Series in Curating and  
Interpreting Culture**



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# Acknowledgements

All books have a back story. This project was born a few years ago in Oaxaca, Mexico, as a pretext to discover a uniquely vibrant culture in the Americas. As I dived into the comparative study of Mexico City and Paris, I realized very quickly that I had touched on a topic that would take me far beyond this trip and that would expand and remain with me for a longer voyage—and it did, as the multitude of places mentioned in this volume and its international contributors' list attest. On this road, I was never alone. First, I want to thank my husband and favorite travel companion Ron Friis, who inspired me to take my first trip to Latin America and who was the best guide that I could possibly ask for. I am also eternally grateful to my friend and colleague Angélica Lozano-Alonso, a Francophone and Francophile at heart who accepted to be my co-author from the very beginning of this adventure, all the way from Oaxaca to our chapter in this volume. Our shared personal knowledge and love for Paris, immigration stories and department stores is a treasure that I will forever cherish. Thank you as well to Dr. Moramay López-Alonso for pointing me in the right direction and helping raise the quality of this volume by providing great reading suggestions and thoughtful insight. I am indebted to my friends and colleagues Jeremy Cass, Bill Allen, Eunice Rojas and Marianne Bessy for supporting and encouraging me in various ways throughout the confection of this edited volume. Thank you for the delicious and unforgettable dinner overlooking Mexico City's Zocalo, for all the many thought-provoking conversations, the personal stories about Paris in France, or its many manifestations in the Americas, and above all, thank you for believing in the viability of this project. On the other side of the Atlantic, merci to my dear friend from way back in Louisiana Jean-Xavier Brager for inspiring me to dig deeper and never let go. Merci to Oliver Bertrand, a true Parisian, for always welcoming me in the 2nd arrondissement and for always understanding what being cosmopolitan truly means. Last but not least, merci to my childhood friend Elodie Lambert for being my personal Parisian news correspondent, information contact and street art pictures provider. This collection of fragments of Paris around the Americas is for all of you.

Carole Salmon



# Introduction: Plural Identities, Paris *pluriels*

Carole Salmon  
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The worldwide intersections and interactions of spaces, languages and cultures are increasingly studied by anthropologists, Cultural Studies specialists, sociolinguists, and urban planners, as well as researchers in other disciplines who all agree that they play a crucial role in the shaping and constant evolution of collective and individual identities. Those intersections also influence encounters that one may have with the many facets that define each and every human being across cultures and languages. Moreover, the multitude of ways in which we interact with each other in today's rapidly changing global world is an essential part of the globalization process that we are currently experiencing. Yet, these international exchanges, that can be seen as a cosmopolitan phenomenon, have always existed, although at a slower pace. In fact, the Greek etymology of the word 'cosmopolite'—being a citizen of the world—reflects that practice and its reality. Contacts and interactions of people and goods via trades of all kinds—virtually or in person—amount to a potentially limitless combination of human beings, values, and social groups constantly sharing and reshaping identities by including, rejecting, or adapting cultural or linguistic elements borrowed from others in a voluntary or sometimes imposed process of syncretism.

If people's identities are multiple and everchanging, so is Paris's identity. Indeed, there is not one Paris, there are, if you will, "Parises." Every person who comes into contact with the French capital experiences the city in a unique and personal way, connects with it through all their senses, both physically and intellectually, and interprets its urbanity and atmosphere(s) in an idiosyncratic way. Therefore, just as there is not one Paris, there is not one influence of Paris in the Americas, but multiple ones, expressing and rendering all its immaterial essences, as well as all the symbols of its physical landscape. The multitude of takeaways from people across the Americas on "their" Paris is reflected in the many ways in which Paris has influenced and sometimes (re)shaped places throughout the new continent, influences that

are themselves expressed in many different ways, as the wide range of topics covered by the essays that comprise this volume will show.

Much has been written on Americans in Paris, and on influences brought from the Americas to the French capital. But this book aims to take a different route by focusing on the opposite leg of the transatlantic voyage: reflecting on Paris's influences across the Americas, in order to examine the pieces, big and small, tangible and intangible, brought by Parisians to the American continent throughout the centuries.

Since France's explorations and then its colonial enterprises in the Americas, starting in the sixteenth century, from la Nouvelle France in the north, to the vast Louisiana territory along the Mississippi river, and its "discoveries" of Caribbean islands and territories to the south of the American continent, Paris immediately established itself as a major source of influences across the Americas. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803, by which Napoléon sold Louisiana to Jefferson, by then president of a young United States nation, marked the end of the French colonial presence in North America, even though until today, the islands of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon, located south of Newfoundland, as well as a few Caribbean islands such as Martinique, Guadeloupe, Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Martin are still ruled by France and as such, are currently considered French ultra-marine territories or départements, depending on their individual administrative status.

Later on, in the second half of the eighteenth, and throughout the nineteenth centuries in particular, France's—and therefore Paris's, siege of all political powers in the nation—diplomatic relations and military alliances with powers across the American continent grew stronger than ever and intensified, thus resulting in a vigorous bilateral transatlantic movement of people, goods and ideas, as well as the exportation of Parisian intellectualism and cultural productions of all sorts (music, painting, theater, literature, fashion, etc.). From those contacts, big and small, individual exchanges and personal experiences led to the discovery and circulation of beliefs, cultural practices, fashion(s) trends and ideas, commerce, educational exchanges, leading all parties involved to the realization that there is definitely more than one way to comprehend and interpret the world. Those differences in turn became traditions, trends, or models to follow, reject, and more likely, to incorporate into one's own set of cultural practices and society in the Americas, through a syncretic process. Ever since Antiquity, whether it be at the personal or at the collective level, syncretism has been a powerful process at the heart of societal evolution, first in the religious domain, and eventually in all levels of cultures and ideologies. When the philosophical movement of the Enlightenment emerged in eighteenth-century Paris, it immediately spread to the Americas via individuals who read, understood, and adapted these

revolutionary ideals and values such as Liberté-Egalité-Fraternité to the reality of their home countries, across the American continent.

As Patrice Higonnet demonstrated in his essay *Paris: Capital of the World*, in itself, the influence of nineteenth-century Paris, seen by many as “capital of the world,” is a form of phantasmagoria which resulted in a transatlantic fascination for the City of Lights and all the tangible or intangible elements that function as its embodiment. Furthermore, as Stuart Hall explains, understanding cultures and languages and their representations through various manifestations presupposes that we can identify, understand, and interpret the signs that constitute their core identity: “Meaning does not inhere in things in the world. It is constructed, produced. It is the result of a signifying practice—a practice that produces meaning [...]. Things don’t mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems—concepts and signs” (10-11). In fact, Paris and its vast influence across time and space throughout the Americas embodies exactly this idea. As further developed by Anna-Louise Milne in her introduction titled “The City as Book,” written for a manual on the literature of Paris, the French capital is a complex and layered city, offering multiplicity and depth, composed of both an immaterial “essence” and a material landscape, resulting in a combination of symbolic construction and material exploration. Therefore, Paris can be interpreted and seen as the product of a complex evolution in the relation between space and identity (2-4). In his 1977 essay *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Yi-Fu Tuan notes that when reflecting on the experiential perspective of people regarding place and space, “[i]t is a characteristic of the symbol-making human species that its members can become passionately attached to places of enormous size, such as nation-state, of which they can have only limited direct experience” (18). One can therefore experience Paris, even from afar, and even without being familiar with the physical city. Paris can transport itself abroad, and the traces of its many influences are at the heart of this volume. French American writer Julien Green declares, in his 1983 essay titled *Paris*, that “to speak of Paris is to speak ‘in the plural’” (qtd. Milne 3). As the reader will discover in the eleven contributions that compose this book, this quintessential plurality of Paris, capital of France, sometimes also called in the nineteenth century “capital of the world,” definitely traveled to the Americas in the “analog” world from the past and is still at work in the twenty-first century’s “digital” world, where all individual experiences are still, via social media and other means of communication, a collective gain for cosmopolitanism.

This Parisian plurality phenomenon has indeed been exponentially broadened by the democratization of the Internet in the late 1990s. This technology now allows users to access the world virtually and affordably. In

this sense, (post)modernity and (post)globalization have removed or at least transcended borders and other physical obstacles that used to prevent parts of the humanity from accessing certain parts of the world, such as Paris. Trying to analyze today's (post)global world and the place of human contacts within what is sometimes called "the global village," French anthropologist Marc Augé, a leader in the field of hypermodernity studies since the 1990s, remarks in his 2012 opus *Pour une anthropologie de la mobilité* that nowadays, due to the generalization of Internet-based technologies, a paradox has developed when it comes to people's relationship to travel. In fact, Augé continues, one can envision the city as world and the world as city, since we can all experience a certain degree of mobility without having to physically go places<sup>1</sup>. That means that anyone can now go to Paris (virtually), which results in the perennity of a constant flux of influences still coming from the City of Lights to the Americas, even if in a revisited fashion. In fact, this is exactly what happened during the worldwide disruption of our physical ability to travel during the "pandemic years," caused by the Covid-19 virus that started in March 2020.

### **Paris in the Americas: Cultural Productions and Urban Connections**

In a truly interdisciplinary approach, this book is a collection of eleven essays that examine a wide variety of those long-established relationships between Paris and countries or cities across the American continent (North, Central and South America) and across time. Overall, the time period covered in this collection of essays spans from the eighteenth century until nowadays, through analyses of many aspects of Paris's influence(s) in the Americas. A non-exhaustive list of the themes covered in this volume already proves the richness and diversity of this topic, ranging from Parisian theater troupes touring Canada from the late 1700s on, in the former French region of Acadia, but also San Francisco and New York, to literature in Buenos Aires and the United States, to Existentialist philosophers and fashion, urban planning in New York City, Washington D.C., but also Brazil and Mexico City. Besides the fact that many locations are named "Paris" in the United States—the most famous one probably being Paris, Texas, thanks to the eponymous 1984 road movie by acclaimed German filmmaker Wim Wenders—, many cities of all sizes across North, Central and Latin America have been influenced by Paris,

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<sup>1</sup>"Le monde est une ville" [et] "la ville est un monde" [dans lequel] "s'expriment les contradictions ou les tensions historiques engendrées par ce système" (34): "the world is a city" [and] "the city is a world" [in which] "contradictions or historical tensions generated by this system express themselves." (my translation).

France in their layout, their architecture, their general atmosphere or reputation, thus perpetuating the dual aspect of the capital city's identity and aura mentioned earlier, comprised of both an immaterial essence and a material landscape. Washington D.C., the United States' current capital, was designed by French architect Pierre Charles L'Enfant and was often called "Paris on the Potomac"; nineteenth-century Mexico City's department stores were heavily influenced by Haussmannian Paris; Buenos Aires is known around the world as "the Paris of Latin America," to name a few examples that will be developed in this volume. Sometimes, the Parisian influence was linked to immigration (either from people or groups of various countries in the Americas to Paris, or from Parisians to the Americas), thus allowing those fascinating intersections and interactions of spaces, languages and cultures mentioned earlier to take place, as this book will explore. Many traces of this past Parisian influence are still visible today, while others have faded away, and new Parisian influences arise.

For the vast majority of the past centuries, there was no easy, fast, and affordable way of communication between Europe and the Americas, until the invention of the Internet in the late twentieth century. And yet, despite all the material obstacles to communication, travel and mobility in general (not to mention the dangers that such a long voyage entailed in the early colonial times), public archives preserved in national libraries across Europe and the Americas attest that there has been an impressive amount of contacts, exchange of ideas and influences of all kinds between the capital of France and the new continent, from North to South, and from East to West. In the late nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution on both sides of the Atlantic and the explosion of printed media (such as newspapers and magazines), the implementation of World's Fairs in the United Kingdom and France (London hosted the first one in 1851 and Paris followed in 1855) and the improvement of transatlantic voyages by steamboats—that not only shortened and made the crossing safer for passengers, but also allowed for personal written correspondences and commercial goods to circulate faster—all contributed to the acceleration of the circulation of knowledge and progress and, by the same token, of Paris's influences in the Americas. Regardless of their geographical focus, all the chapters in this volume that analyze topics based in the twentieth century and beyond contain both personal (individual) and national (collective) instances of mobility between the two continents (either in person or virtually) that allowed for cultural contacts between the home culture in the Americas and the Parisian one in France, and eventually resulted in the undeniable expansion and sometimes even politization of the Parisian influence across the Americas, especially after World War I and World War II. It was still the case a few decades later under the presidency of John

Fitzgerald Kennedy in the early 1960s, through the unique political and personal connections that his iconic wife Jackie Bouvier Kennedy had with the French capital.

The current post-pandemic world of the 2020s is resolutely global—even, in some ways, post-global and sometimes even “glocal.” When the entire humanity was forced to slow down for almost two years due to the Covid 19 virus, it made us realize how fast the pace of our daily lives was going and likewise, how quickly large numbers of people and great amounts of goods were moving around the planet. Yet, despite the general slowdown imposed by the pandemic, diverging political agendas and controversial presidents of certain nations across the new continent at various times, transnational ties between Paris and the Americas still remain strong and well. That mutual fascination steadies its course through time and space, and remains constant and bilateral, as if the eternal *Latinité* of Paris, France, and the Anglo-Saxon influences that define most American nations north of Mexico could never cease to coexist and blend, and as if Paris would also always be an integral part of the Latin American nations that it has been influencing.

### **General Organization and Presentation of the Contributions**

This volume is articulated in two main parts that reflect the essential dual nature of Paris’s identity (as explained above) composed of both immaterial essences and physical landscape symbols that transcended borders and that we can see or experience across the Americas: “Cultural Productions” (part one) and “Urban Connections” (part two). Each part loosely follows a chronological order while going from North to South in the Americas in the first part, and from South to North in the second part, to end with an essay offering a global approach on the topic. This organization emerged organically from the eleven contributions that are included here, and which all address a different facet of the topic—the various influences of Paris in the Americas, yesterday and today— while complementing each other.

The six essays which form the first part, “Cultural Productions,” offer an overview of the City of Lights’ influences in various cultural expressions throughout the continent and the centuries. Elena Mazzoleni’s opening essay retraces the influences of Parisian Vaudeville in America from the late 1700s all the way through the twentieth century and focuses on the attested presence of theater troupes from Paris who toured in the formerly French colony of Acadia in eastern Canada, as well as later on, during the nineteenth century in San Francisco and New York, and whose legacy can be retraced in today’s American theater. In the following essay, Anne Quinney explores the fascinating connections between Paris’s iconic Existentialist philosophers, in particular their leading figures Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, and

how their portrayal in highly-regarded American magazines such as *The Atlantic* or *Vogue Magazine* in post-World War II America not only helped popularizing their philosophical ideas in the United States, but also influenced American fashion in an unexpected way with their uniquely Parisian and intellectual sartorial *élégance à la française*. Only a few years later, iconic public figure Jackie Kennedy, who literally and figuratively brought French—and essentially Parisian—culture to the White House in the early 1960s, is the object of William Allen's essay. This text carefully reviews the many ties and connections of Jackie's private and public life with Paris in general—and with its fashion and style in particular—, a “Jackie effect” that deeply influenced middle-class Americans and that is still alive today. With Marcelline Block's contribution, the reader is invited to watch the influence of the Parisian fashion world and its international aura through the lens of American cinema. In particular, her study zooms on the intersections of film, journalism, *haute couture*, and Paris as “*capitale de la mode*” in American films from the mid-1950s until the 2010s. The last two chapters of part one focus on representations of Paris in literature in North and South America. Cheryl Morgan's essay investigates the role of Paris in twentieth and twenty-first American crime fictions, especially through the novels of two acclaimed American authors, Cara Black and Louis Bayard, and each one of their respective fascinating reconstituted Parisian universes. This first part's last contribution takes us to Buenos Aires in Argentina—often called “the Paris of Latin America”—with Eunice Rojas's literary analysis of Paris's influence in contemporary Argentine novels by three authors—Julio Cortázar, Juan José Saer, and Matías Alinovi—using Harold Bloom's six strategies as a literary theoretical framework to explain the anxiety of influence.

We remain in South America as we move to the five essays that comprise the second part of this volume, titled “Urban Connections.” This part focuses on the exportation or reproductions of more tangible symbols of Paris's plural identity, visible in the physical landscapes across the Americas' places and spaces, some urban planning inspirations and landmarks, all reminiscing of the City of Lights. The first essay, by Roderick Barman, takes us to Brazil and examines, from a historical point of view, the many individual and official ties that existed between Rio de Janeiro, post-colonial capital of a relatively new Brazilian nation, and Paris as its model, during the long nineteenth century. The reader then travels from Brazil to Mexico with Angélica Lozano-Alonso & Carole Salmon's essay, which retraces the origins of Parisian influences in Mexico City through its most symbolic, historical, and touristic landmarks, from Mexico's independence in 1821 to the twenty-first century. The next contribution, by John Sampson, takes the reader back to the United States as it examines the transnational dimension at work in the urban planning of its

current capital, Washington D.C. Originally designed by French architect Pierre Charles L'Enfant (a Royal Academy-trained Parisian artist) and sometimes referred to as "Paris on the Potomac," Washington D.C.'s urban map aligns surprisingly well with the one of Paris. In his essay, Sampson also ties in several political and literary sources (especially through Henry James' works) that play an important role in this long-term urban planning process. We stay on the East Coast of the United States with Susan Keith's comparative study between two recently repurposed inner-city industrial railroads: the High Line of lower Manhattan in New York City and the *Promenade plantée* in the 12<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris. The similarities between these two urban spaces—both turned into touristic trails in the recent years—are fascinating and prove that Paris is still regarded as an inspirational model of urban planning in the United States today. The final essay of this volume, by Gruia Badescu, takes the reader back to Buenos Aires in Argentina, arguing that Buenos Aires has been called "the Paris of Latin America" more because of its urban imaginary than for its urban image. This essay takes a global approach and draws comparisons with other "Parises" around the world, such as Bucharest in Romania or Beirut in Lebanon, where travelers can also find reminiscences of the City of Lights.

Finally, the reader may be surprised not to find a chapter on some obvious and well-established "French" places of the new world, like Quebec, Louisiana, or the French Caribbean islands. This lack is due to both the unavoidable contingencies of all edited volumes, which can never fully encompass everything about the topic they are exploring, and a conscious effort in editorial choices to offer a space to showcase some less-commonly known and sometimes unexpected Parisian influences and connections in the Americas. Hopefully, the reader will enjoy these explorations and appreciate how deep Paris's many influences have been running across the new world both yesterday and today.

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William G. Allen is Professor of French and Italian at Furman University, where he has served as Chair of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. A frequent contributor to the book review pages of *The French Review* and other journals, his research interests have centered on authors like Gautier, Baudelaire, and Hugo, including explorations of the connections between sartorial and literary style, images of the abyss and the infinite, and travel writing. Other research has centered on novelists focused on the years of the Occupation, including Irène Némirovsky and Patrick Modiano. Dr. Allen's esthetic perspectives came into being during the Camelot years of the early 1960s, making the elaboration of the chapter in the current publication a particularly introspective as well as historico-cultural exercise.

## **Gruia Bădescu**

Gruia Bădescu is a Research Fellow at the Zukunftscolleg, University of Konstanz. His research examines the relationship between architecture and political projects, including memory politics and imaginaries of future utopias. He holds a Ph.D. in Architecture from the University of Cambridge. Before Konstanz, he was a lecturer and research associate at the University of Oxford, where he researched with an AHRC-Labex grant entanglements of memory between the Southern Cone of Latin America and Southeastern Europe. In Konstanz, he is the principal investigator of a project on urban imaginaries after political ruptures.

## **Roderick J. Barman**

Roderick J. Barman is a leading expert in the history of Brazil during the nineteenth century. A graduate of King's College, Cambridge, and the University of California at Berkeley, he has published widely, including articles, book chapters and three monographs: *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation, 1798-1852*, *Citizen Emperor: Pedro II and the Making of Brazil, 1825-1891* and *Princess Isabel of Brazil: Gender and Power in the Nineteenth Century*, the last two being published in translation in Brazil. He has recently completed the text for *Liberty for Brazil: Priests, Pardos, Freemasons and Small Folk in the Struggle for Independence*. He is Professor Emeritus of the Department of History, University of British Columbia, Canada.

**Marcelline Block**

Marcelline Block's book chapters, articles, and essays on French and francophone cinema, literature, music, and visual art appear in numerous publications such as *Allons au cinéma: Promoting French through Films* (volumes 2, 3, 4); *Cahiers Tristan Corbière*, and *The French Review*. Among her publications are *ReFocus: The Films of Michel Gondry*; *Le grain de la voix dans le monde anglophone et francophone*; *An Anthology of French Singers from A to Z: Singin' in French*; the first French to English translation of *Propaganda Documentaries in France, 1940-1944* by Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit; *French Cinema and the Great War: Remembrance and Representation*; *French Cinema in Close-up: La vie d'un acteur pour moi*; *Fan Phenomena: Marilyn Monroe*; *The Directory of World Cinema: Belgium*; *Filmer Marseille*, and the Boston, Las Vegas, Marseille, Paris, and Prague volumes of the acclaimed *World Film Locations* series. Marcelline is the recipient of awards, fellowships, and prizes from the American Association of Teachers of French; Columbia University; Harvard University; the Modern Language Association; the New York Public Library; New York University; the Screen Actors Guild Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education, among others. Her essay "Poète maudit et cinéaste paria. La poésie de Tristan Corbière comme inspiration pour les films *Les Amours jaunes* et *La Rose de fer* de Jean Rollin" is a Finalist for the 2021 Jamie Bishop Memorial Award of the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts for an essay on the fantastic written in a language other than English. Marcelline's writing is translated into Chinese, French, German, Italian, Korean, and Russian.

**Susan Keith**

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*circo moderno. Le migrazioni e gli intrecci drammaturgici dei circhi Astley, Ricketts e Chiarini; Le théâtre et le cinéma américains à l'ombre du mythe d'Eleonora Duse: l'Actors Studio de Lee Strasberg et le jeu de Mimì Aguglia and Nohant n'est plus Nohant, c'est un théâtre". Le décor intime des objets scéniques.*

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