

SUZANNE DRACIUS

Translated from the French by Nancy Naomi Carlson

NÈGZAGONALE

She landed, windswept
At Lamentin Airport
*At the end of the dawn.**
You called her “chabine calazaza,”
Newly arrived from the Other Shore.
Mam’selle was born over there,
With a chocolate complexion
Sweetened by honey and milk.

Nègzagonale

Euroblack

Listen a little, listen to learn.
Listen, stop playing the fool!
Let me tell you: it makes no difference to us,
Cute little chassis with rhythmic curves,
Face cocoa-flour from France
Born the devil of a long way from anywhere, department 93,
She only knows her mother was West Indian,
She’s never heard a word of Creole.
Sarcelles was where she went to school.

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Négropolitaine, Francoblack,

Listen a little, listen to learn.

You must not disrespect the *chabine*
For not having drunk Antillean arrowroot,
Nor fill with terror this gamine
For not having grown in the lower woods.
She’s not a shrew spewing lies.
She’s a little pistol in jacket and jeans.
She’s not a bimchette,

Don't give her a hard time!

Nèzagonale, Euroblack,
Listen a little, listen to learn!

You nicknamed her "Mam'selle With Mongoose Hair"
In France it was Red-Haired Negress.
On the Other Shore she was exotic.
Here she's hydroponic.
Where is she at home?
Where can she feel at home?

Nèzagonale? Euroblack?
Négropolitaine? Rat-a-tat-tat!

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The drum echoes, Carnival here,
She begins to dance as *le vidé*, the procession, hits the streets.
There she goes, the *chabine* who leaps through the parade...
The big Ka drum shakes her, mini bamboo drums make her undulate,
Music leads her along.
There she goes, "Mongoose Hair" who welcomes Vaval!
Gone is *Nèzagonale*.
Big Ka, mini drums, rat-a-tat!
No talk of *Euroblack*,
The zouk is a zouk from hell, a bacchanal!

O Madiana, pack up your violins,
You no longer call her "*Euroblack*"...

Matinino, day has dawned,
It's you who is caught!

You no longer nickname her “Mongoose Hair”
So sweet, so fair...

Leave her in peace, give her some air,
Leave her some time to take care of affairs!

Nèzagonale or *Euroblack*,
Stop flirting with my little sister!

Fort-de-France, May 1991

**In 1991, quoting “at the end of the dawn”—leitmotif of Aimé Césaire’s Cahier d’un retour au pays natal—I didn’t know that Lamentin Airport would be called “Aimé Césaire Airport” in 2008. There are no coincidences. There are only correspondences.*

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TRANSLATOR’S NOTE

Nèzagonale and *négropolitaine* are pejorative French words used to describe West Indians born in France, combining *nègre* with *hexagonale* (referring to the hexagonal shape of France) and *métropolitaine* (also pertaining to France). *Euroblack* and *Francoblack* are synonyms for these terms. *Chabine* and *calazaza* refer to light-skinned, biracial persons with red or blond hair and some black features. *Madiana* and *Matinino* are ancient Amerindian names for Martinique, and “O Madiana” is the name of a traditional Creole song sung at the end of a festive ball.