

# French Alterity

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## Articulating Intra-National Difference in the New Europe

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Questioning Europe in our *fin-de-siècle* moment requires the recognition of a distinct paradox: that while dreams of the creation of a unified bloc are being realized, the continent finds itself increasingly divided by ethnic and regional nationalist movements.<sup>1</sup> Even more surprisingly, such 'minority' groups have further legitimized themselves in and through the very institutions created by the European Community, while simultaneously organizing their demands on the basis of events occurring outside of Europe's territorial borders. Not to slip into Spenglerian angst, this situation need not necessarily imply the decline or *aufhebung* of the 'West', but rather its further entrenchment in a globalizing world traversed by flows of information, commodities, and people. In the case of the post-colonial Algerian community in

France, it is clear that the 160 leagues of sea between Marseilles and Algiers have grown less insurmountable over recent years than the mere thirty kilometer distance separating suburban Sarcelles from center-city Paris. The permeability of external borders (in spite of increased security measures) has in many ways been largely balanced by the growth of internal ethnic and religious frontiers.

At the root of the reformulation of center-periphery relations within Europe lies a history of labor migration both from former colonies and spheres of influence into the metropolises, as well as within the metropole itself, from France's rural peripheries into its central urban areas. In the case of Algeria, while economic immigration was put to an official end in 1973, by 1996 an estimated 1.5 million Algerian immigrants and their children had become permanent residents if not active citizens of the Hexagone. Likewise, in spite of the influx of migrant labor and repatriated colonists from the other side of the Mediterranean, many regions in southern, Occitan-speaking France have actually experienced a migratory deficit since the end of the Algerian War in 1962 (Alcouffe et al. 1979: 43-48).<sup>2</sup> Such migration, while largely circular, self-reproducing,

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2 Similar figures can be seen in Brittany. These demographic changes are significant when population statistics are globally considered. While the population in France increased by forty-four percent between 1851 and 1975, five *départements* in the southwest had barely maintained the same number of residents.

and of short duration, has recently taken on a more permanent character, with families of several generations installed in the major French cities of Paris, Marseille, and Lyon and their surrounding housing projects. The result has been the growth of identifiable ethnic and linguistic communities, occupying particular socio-economic and professional categories, and maintaining internal social cohesion through networks of cultural associations, self-help groups, and service industries (cafés, groceries, bookshops, etc.). At the same time, these urban groups have effectuated close social and economic ties with their regions of origin through income remittance, family visits, and cultural-political activist groups with branches both throughout the region in question and in the diasporic communities. In this way, the constitution of French sub-national alterity operates ironically through the medium of trans-regional – if not trans-national – connections.

My ethnographic research in France conducted from March 1995 to November 1996 focused on the constitution and maintenance of one such diasporic community, that of Algerian-Berbers (or *Imazighen*) and their French-born children. Expecting to focus on internal community dynamics and the relations between immigrant cultural associations and the state immigration apparatus, I proceeded to interview Berber militants and scholars, detailing their genealogies and histories of political activity. However, in the process of establishing this particular cultural and political history, several significant events forced me to re-evaluate the exclusive focus of the research. The first concerned the summer 1995 terrorist bombings of subway stations and public squares, attacks which were eventually attributed to the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) who were currently fighting a civil war in Algeria. This startling event elicited from observers three sorts of historical memories and references: first, the obvious case of the Algerian War of 1954–62, during which the revolutionary National Liberation Front (FLN) wrote the book on guerilla warfare; second, the more recent 1986 set of terrorist attacks in Paris by a Lebanese militant group; and finally, surprisingly, a non-Arab case – the 1968 bombing campaign by Breton nationalists against government targets.

This last historical connection found re-iteration in a second event which I witnessed: the winter 1995–96 general strikes by French public workers. While the strikers were responding primarily to the ‘austerity’ economic measures proposed by prime minister Alain Juppé, a seemingly unrelated group, the Breton nationalist movement, joined the marching unions, using this widescale anti-government protest as a forum to denounce recent government decisions of political and linguistic centralization. Finally, the spectre of French regionalism haunted my research again in reference to a third event: the celebrations and debates surrounding the anniversary of the 1980 ‘Berber Spring’ which launched the modern Berber Cultural Movement. While these annual worldwide events generally focus on internal Algerian affairs, perhaps with some reference to larger Berber struggles throughout North Africa, 1996’s version took a very different tenor, as Occitan militants were invited to offer their own insights to the Berber cause.

In each of the three cases, then, events ostensibly about state security, the economy, and foreign policy respectively took on a cultural mien, being transformed by their participants and observers into an internal French debate concerning the legitimacy of ethnic differences in the French imaginary. What became clear during the course of my

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As a whole, the percentage of France’s population residing in the Occitan speaking region diminished by five-percent over this period. On the basis of these statistics, a number of Occitan activists have denounced the situation as one of ‘internal colonialism’ (Alcouffe et al. 1979: 47–48; cf. Sibé 1988: 11; Touraine et al. 1988: 81).

research is that the French nation-state is today more than ever experiencing a *Kulturkampf* in which a majoritarian Francophone population, regional ethnic and linguistic minorities, and post-colonial immigrant communities each have a major stake. Recognizing this overarching context, I found myself asking a series of questions: Why this recurrent association of immigrant and regional concerns? What do the events detailed above indicate about the nature of cultural political struggle in France in this late-modern historical moment? How have various categories of sub-national difference articulated themselves with a more-than-ever centralized French state on the one hand, and a globalizing European political space on the other?

In this article, I directly address these queries, questioning particularly how the growth of the Algerian Berberist movement within France relates both to internal transformations in the character of French national identity (from ‘Empire’ to ‘Europe’) and to the simultaneous development of regionalist challenges to the nation-state in both Algeria and France. In particular, I discuss how state discourses and practices of centralization, integration and control have *produced* rather than erased particular categories of non-national difference which immigrant and ethnic minority groups have appropriated and mobilized for the construction of alternative narratives of sub- and trans-national identity. Focusing on the burgeoning interaction of the trans-national Algerian-Berber cultural movement and the localized Breton and Occitan militant organizations, the paper explores how these groups have allied their demands for equal cultural and linguistic expression (intimated as a ‘universal right’) and unitedly petitioned European administrative bodies. As such, the paper addresses how challenges to the integrity of the French nation-state itself, to its capacity of managing immigrant ethno-racial and religious difference, have been intimately tied to a transnational sphere of activity linking France to Algeria, and from Algeria back to the European Union. As this situation closely echoes other contexts of post-colonial migration which tie northern European metropolises to currently unstable, southern peripheries (cf. Gilroy 1991 for the British case; Fijulkowski 1993 for the German one), the observations and conclusion may prove generally relevant for contemporary Europe as a whole.

#### ETHNICITY AND THE NATION-STATE

An important starting point for a discussion of the *Kulturkampf* that tacitly allies immigrant and regionalist cultural movements in contemporary France concerns the colonial production of particular ethnic categories, categories today mobilized in both support of and opposition to the French nation-state. Theories of nationalism within the fields of history and political science have consistently focused on the modern nation-state as the final product of a powerful set of discourses and practices which, emerging on the eve of the 1789 French Revolution, quickly spread in a variety of forms across the world – becoming the singular, hegemonic form of sovereignty in geopolitics it is today. Using a ‘constructivist’ approach, such theories have driven home the notion that the nation is an invented entity, a recently-formulated ‘imagined community’ of compatriots separated by great distances, unaware of each others’ physical existence, united through the common practice of modern, daily rituals (cf. Anderson 1983). Moreover, such national construction is effectuated in contrast to ethnic groups (or *ethnies* in Anthony D. Smith’s terminology [1986]) which are imputed with a primordial authenticity. For theorists like Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm, *ethnies* constitute the building blocks for building national formations. However, as one of the major

components of nationalization is a common linguistic policy, the “homogenization and standardization of its inhabitants, essentially by means of a written ‘national language’” (Hobsbawm 1990: 93), such prior attachments often needed to be eliminated. “Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying man, as an inherent political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that is reality*” (Gellner 1983: 48–49). Primordial ties (of ethnicity, religion, territory, dialect, etc.) if anything stand in the way of nationalist movements, and thus ‘tribalism’ becomes the anathema of modernity.

Interestingly, cultural activists often use these same assumptions of primordiality to justify their own claims of originality and signal the oppression which they have experienced at the hands of nation-states. Within the Berber movement in Algeria, various engaged intellectuals have made a concerted effort to portray Berberity as the true, ordinary identity of Algeria, the Maghreb, and the southern Mediterranean as a whole. They have sought historical evidence in the writings of early Roman geographers (Sallust, Procop) and proposed linguistic theories to demonstrate that Berber language and culture antedated the arrival of Arabs in North Africa in the seventh (Islamic armies) and eleventh (Benu Hillal) centuries. The efforts of the Algerian revolutionary parties from the 1920s to 1960s to unify the colony’s indigenous populace under the then powerful anti-colonial motifs of Arab nationalism and Islam, in the eyes of stalwart Berber activists, amounted to the denial of the Algerian people of their essential Berber identity – the true identity of all Algerians, whether or not a given Algerian speaks a Berber dialect or recognizes him or herself as having Berber roots. The current disunity of Algeria, embodied most poignantly in the current civil war which has claimed upwards of 70,000 lives over the last five years, in this regard can be seen as resulting largely from an ‘identity crisis’. This crisis of identity has left the Algerian people utterly disoriented in an increasingly globalizing world and willing to grasp at the first strong organizing principle to arise – in this case Islamic fundamentalism. A return to Algeria’s fundamental identity – Berberity – is thus proposed as the needed solution.

While no civil war as such has occurred in Brittany or Occitania, cultural activists have nonetheless mobilized similar claims to primordiality and levied criticisms against the French nation-state for suppressing their regional heritage (*patrimoine*). Viewing the French language as a post-Revolutionary, Parisian formulation imposed on the French countryside by the state’s centralization policies and national education practices, they have legitimized their contemporary demands for multi-cultural education through the stipulated pre-French Celtic and Latinate character of the Breton and Occitan languages respectively. The recent economic exploitation and ecological decimations of their regions they see as consonant with two hundred years of cultural and linguistic homogenization. As in the case of the Berber cultural movement in Algeria, the revitalization of primordial ethnic and linguistic identities in France would serve, according to Occitan or Breton militants, as a means to counter global challenges to the integrity of national models; in their view, if the French state only embraced its regional cultures, it could maintain its cultural individuality in the face of German and American imperialisms.

### *Colonialism and National Integration*

However, the assumption of primordiality shared by theorists and critics of nationalism glosses over the historicity of ethnic categories and the role of nationalist discourses in their constitution. In the first place, one must re-focus on the colonial period as a determining moment in the production of both national and ethnic social formations.

Beyond Benedict Anderson’s emphasis on creole pioneers on nationalism (Anderson 1983), one must follow Ashis Nandy in linking the development of European nationalist sentiment to the colonial process itself. Through various colonial discourses which associated the Indian populace with children (among which Marx’s “On Imperialism in India” [Marx 1978] must be numbered), Britain was able to impute to itself “magical feelings” of being “an advanced culture where human reason and civilized norms had the greatest influence, and a polity farthest on the road to revolutionary self-actualization” (Nandy 1983: 35). In the case of France, this was exactly the *mission civilisatrice*, a self-aggrandizing ideological form which simultaneously justified colonial expansion and a pro-assimilationist national self-understanding. Such sentiments of superiority fed into a nationalism already underwritten by a “false sense of homogeneity” instilled in part through the mechanics of colonization. “Colonialism blurred the lines of social divisions by opening up alternate channels of social mobility in the colonies and by underwriting nationalist sentiments through colonial wars of expansion or through wars with other ambitious European powers seeking a share of colonial glory” (Nandy 1983: 33).

This interplay between metropole and colony in the entrenchment of state national regime of sovereignty and the putative elimination of social tensions arising from extant heterogeneous class and cultural loyalties is greatly illustrated in the events following the 1870 fall of Louis Napoleon’s Empire at the hands of the invading Prussian army. Following this defeat, the European powers allowed France’s colonial expansion to continue apace in order to divert French attention from the lost territories of Alsace and Lorraine (Cobban 1955: 91). Indeed, such expansion greatly served the interests of the nascent Third Republic to defuse the urban social tensions which would poignantly surface in the 1871 Paris Commune. An October 1870 decree by interim minister Isaac Crémieux effectively replaced the loss of the two eastern provinces through the administrative incorporation of the military colony of Algeria into France in the form of three *départements*, and the granting of full citizenship rights to all European settlers as well as to indigenous Jews (but not Muslims). Reacting largely to these new measures (which included a special ‘Arab tax’ on Muslim non-citizens), a number of tribes in Kabylia (amounting to an estimated 200,000 armed fighters) rose up in January 1871 against the colonial government in a bitter insurrection which would last for fourteen months. Finally, by February 1872, the French colonial army crushed the uprising with absolute vehemence, confiscating 574,000 hectares of land in Greater Kabylia alone. In particular, the military government redistributed over 100,000 acres of this expropriated land as an emigration incentive to 1,183 Alsatian families who had fled to Paris before the invading Prussian armies and had joined the burgeoning, unemployed urban swell which had contributed to the Paris Commune revolts several months earlier (Julien 1963: 65; Talha 1989: 31). Meanwhile, the Kabyle leaders and their families joined the Communards in exile to New Caledonia, one of France’s newly-acquired Pacific colonies, while thousands of others were forced into a situation of migrant labor, bringing them to Tunisia, Algiers, and eventually France in search of work.

Having now consolidated its rule in both Paris and Kabylia, the Third Republic began to utilize the colony as a proving ground for national integration policies and, in doing so, further assimilate it into the metropole. Over the years 1881–82, the French prime minister Jules Ferry drafted a series of laws which put all Algerian public services under the control of the respective French ministries and organized the internal administration along French civil rather than wartime military rule (Collot 1987: 10–11). These measures actually antedated the 1884 legislation on municipalities – allowing for the free election of local mayors as representatives of the State – which would have the

same practical effects for peripheral regions within the metropole. Kabylia was particularly targeted in this incorporation. In 1874, autonomous legal jurisdiction in Kabylia villages (regulated by local, oral laws or *qanoun*) was abolished and regional courts were established. Further, in 1881, Ferry created eight schools in Kabylia according to secular, national education standards he proposed two years earlier as Minister of Education and applied more generally two years later throughout Algeria and France (Lorcin 1995: 190). In this way, the colonies, rather than peripheral regions to which national standards were exported, functioned as an integral element in the consolidation of a republican national regime. The central importance of this integrity definitively manifested itself eighty years later, in the national upheavals accompanying the wars of decolonization. As I will discuss below, such a loss provoked not only the fall of one constitutional government in France, but also a fundamental transformation of French national identity from an Imperial to a European power.

*The Production of Ethnic Particularity: The Kabyle Myth*

The constitution of the French nation-state in the late-nineteenth century did not, however, merely involve the integration of peripheral populations through the simple erasure of autonomous regions constituted by postulated ethnic or linguistic differences (the Kabyles, Occitans, Bretons, etc.). Rather, these measures often involved the contradictory reification of these categories of difference. Techniques of enumeration and categorization (mapping, cadastral surveys, etc.) employed to consolidate rule and centralize authority throughout the Empire actually produced hierarchical schemas along which various populations were slotted. Building on the philosophical models posed by mid-century social evolutionists like Herbert Spencer and racial theorists like Arthur de Gobineau, which had gained a central place in important Parisian research institutions (the Ecole Polytechnique, in particular), military geographers, linguists, and ethnologists catalogued the racial traits, language forms, socio-political traditions, and religious rites they observed among the conquered peoples along a continuum of progress from savagery to civilization (Lorcin 1995). While the colonial *mission civilisatrice* sought to transform such 'natural', incompatible differences into the mere folkloric appendages of a modern society, the continual use of such hierarchical schemas for governing purposes (for alliances, divide-and-conquer tactics, etc.) resulted in the unforeseen generalization and reification of such sub-national categories as essential means of group identification.

A clear example of this contradiction can be seen in the case of the 'Kabyle Myth' in Algeria. Throughout the colonial period in Algeria (1830–1962), ethnological and military reports from Algeria paid particular attention to the Berber-speaking populations of Kabylia, contrasting them to their Arab neighbors.<sup>3</sup> A network of research centers, archives, and journals in both the Maghreb and France devoted to the scientific study of Berber language and culture was created in order to fix the ethnic boundary between the two groups and to use such a division to justify economic and social policy.<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, these studies characterized the Berbers as uncivilized

3 The most famous example of this division occurs in Hannoteau and Letourneux's 1871 study, *La Kabylie et les coutumes kabyles*.

4 Often amounting to apologies or rationalizations for the colonial venture, these studies had as one of their primary goals to create a standard grammar and transliteration system for the various Berber dialects (cf. Carette 1848; Rinn 1889).

warriors, fiercely defending their mountain refuges against all invaders (Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, French).<sup>5</sup> Whereas the Arab accepted the tutelage of Islamic caliphs, the 'fiercely independent' Berber, according to the reports, abhorred the very idea of central authority and was prepared to defend his absolute liberty to the death (Guernier 1950: 171–172). On the other hand, these barbarians were actually seen as relatively close to European civilization, naturally endowed with values consonant with '*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*'. Religiously speaking, they were viewed as less fanatically attached to Islam, for, according to General Daumas, head of Algerian affairs for the French government, "they have accepted the Koran but they have not embraced it" (1855). As such, according to the myth, the Kabyles held their women in high respect; unlike in the Arab cities, Kabyle women were masters of the household and were known to work in the fields veilles.<sup>6</sup> Economically, the Berbers were described as frugal by nature, endowed with a "commercial instinct" which clearly demarcated them from the frivolous Arabs (Démontes 1922: 9). For these "puritan businessmen" (Chevrillon 1927: 84), as Daumas remarked, "laziness is shameful" (Daumas 1855: 178). Finally, on the political level, the Berbers natural "anarchy" was seen to represent an underlying democracy, symbolized by the village council or *tajmaat*. "In this republic, the dominating spirit is that of republican equality" (Guernier 1950: 172).

As such, the Kabyles were stereotyped by French colonial observers as the exact opposite of the lazy tyrannical Arab peoples, and almost European in their nature. It was further claimed that these original inhabitants had been in constant conflict and opposition with the Arabs. "Our man is uncontestedly a Mediterranean of the West; or better yet, he is Western. The Berbers are part of the rational West in formal opposition to the Arabs, who are above all of the imaginative Orient" (Guernier 1950: 173). Drawing on linguistic, archaeological, and physiological comparisons, a series of hypotheses were developed and argued concerning the ancient origin of Berber tribes. While some researchers, following the fourteenth-century observations of Ibn Khaldun, attributed a Semitic origin to Berber tribes as descendants of the Canaanites chased out of the Holy Land by the early Israelites (Mercier 1871; Odinot 1924; Tauxier 1862–63), others insisted that the Berbers of North Africa belonged to one or more European race (Brémont 1942; Guernier 1950; Rinn 1889). In a work subtitled "Barbary is a European Country," General Edouard Brémont concluded definitively: "There is absolutely no doubt that the [Berber] populations of North Africa were originally Mediterranean or Nordic European and have not since been modified" (Brémont 1942: 114). Indeed, the attribution of kinship with indigenous European peoples, whether Basques and Catalans or Gaels and Celts, was more generally accompanied by heuristic attempts to understand the Arab/Berber divide via comparisons with other ethnic and linguistic divisions extant in Europe. Ernest Carette, in his early ethnological study of Kabylia, compared nineteenth-century Algeria to France of the Middle Ages and, in particular, to the regional/linguistic division between the northern *langue d'oil* and the southern *langue d'oc* (Carette 1848: 60–70; cf. Lorcin 1995: 43–45).<sup>7</sup> While Carette associated Kabyle

5 The word, 'Berber,' itself comes from the same Greek root as 'barbarian', though its Arabic usage is generally attributed to a derogatory miscomprehension of Berber dialects as sounding like 'brbr'.

6 Ethnographic evidence was mobilized to claim that Berber culture was originally matriarchal, and that the Islamic invasions only deposited a thin layer of patriarchy on its surface.

7 'Oil' and 'oc' represent alternate words for 'yes' in the pre-French Latin languages. 'Oil' has become the 'oui' of Modern French, while the *langue d'oc* remains the close ancestor of contemporary Occitan dialects in the south of France.

culture with the spirit of the northern *langue d'oil*, subsequent ethnological studies took exception, concluding the contrary (cf. Busset et al. 1929).

Such conflicting comparisons mark the structural ambivalence of a colonial project with both scientific and military goals, operating under a joint imperative to map out and classify ethnological differences and simultaneously assimilate such difference into the knowable and practicable. In their association with Europe's past, the Berbers were singled out as the preferred agents of the colonial project in Algeria, as the privileged targets of the *mission civilisatrice*: "He will easily assimilate to our ideas, to our labor methods" (Démontes 1930: 360). While Algeria never had a specific 'Berber policy' as in Morocco,<sup>8</sup> Kabylia, as we have seen in terms of education policy, received disproportionate attention in terms of the execution of national legislation. While certainly not creating the anti-Arab *évolués* that French officials may have hoped for, this ethnic preference had a dual effect. First, it opened up wide avenues for emigration to France. Often expropriated from their family land holdings by colonial land laws and exposed to French language and culture in school, Kabyle males became prime targets for government and private recruiters to man the French war machine (as soldiers or factory workers) during the two world wars.<sup>9</sup> Although this migratory flux was to spread gradually to Arab Algeria as well, on the eve of the Algerian war, over sixty percent of Algerian immigrants in France still came from the Kabyle provinces, and nearly one quarter of all Kabyle families had at least one member working in France (Khellil 1994: 14). Second, such colonial attention underwrote the later development of a Berber cultural movement in the days following independence. Often adopting the rhetoric of the 'Kabyle Myth', Berber cultural and political associations, as we shall see, continued to use anti-assimilationist claims of being simultaneously primordial (ante-Arab) and European (or at least as a synthesis of East and West, a bridge across the Mediterranean) in their appeals to European governments for economic and political support. Likewise, their stipulated ancestral association with indigenous French minorities (Auvergnats, Basques, Celts) has provided groundwork for their current association with regional cultural movements from these regions.

#### *Regionalism and French Centralization*

Additionally, the recurrent colonial reference to ethnic divisions in France belies late-nineteenth century concerns with integrating peripheral populations into the national project of the Third Republic. While French history textbooks written during this period (and often still in use today in one form or another) attributed French ethnic origins to 'our ancestors the Gauls' and treated the French nation as a *fait accompli* with the 1789 Revolution, scholarly debates over these origins and unity continued apace during the interim.<sup>10</sup> As Eugen Weber has poignantly argued, the process of nationalization of

8 In Morocco, the colonial government issued the infamous Berber 'dahir' of 1930, in which the Berber populations were administratively divided from Arab ones, and were allowed to be governed by their own customary tribunals and courts of appeal instead of the Islamic shari'a courts. Kabyle Berbers were thus singled out in exactly the opposite manner, as potential French citizens.

9 See Bourdieu and Sayad 1964 for a discussion of colonial land expropriations; cf. Khellil 1979: 72-77 for the influence of the colonial school system and colonial recruiters on Kabyle emigration.

10 Early racial interpretations of the French Revolution by the Abbé de Sièyes, for instance, linked the Third Estate with the Biblical Gauls overthrowing the Aryan Frankish aristocracy. Whether France was intrinsically Gaulish or Frankish became a subject of wide academic controversy for nearly a century. Later, the romantic historian, Jules Michelet, situated the originality of France in the very melange of these races with others (cf. Citron 1994).

France actually continued well into the twentieth century, with the cultural and political power only gradually being taken away from local clergy and notables by state-appointed and elected school teachers and prefects (Weber 1976). Of particular importance in this gradual transformation was the place of local languages in the national education system. In many cases, especially in Brittany, this question of linguistic homogenization was tied directly to that of secularization. There, the four administrative districts (*départements*) established after the 1789 Revolution were mapped directly onto the former province's four historical Catholic dioceses or bishoprics, which themselves corresponded to four linguistic areas where different dialects of Breton were spoken. After Napoleon's 1801 concordat with the Catholic Church, as reiterated as late as 1850 in the Loi Falloux, clergy members gained a greater say in school administration and everyday teaching. Schools became primarily establishments for children to learn religious catechism, and given the ambiguity of the legislation, this teaching was administered in the respective Breton dialect (McDonald 1989: 37). In this way, the reproduction of Breton cultural belonging was largely mediated by the Church through the school system.

It was exactly these mechanisms of ethno-linguistic identity production which the Ferry laws of the early-1880s sought to eliminate. The law of 28 March 1882 made all elementary schooling compulsory and secular, removing all influence of the clergy from the school system. Further, an 1887 regulation unequivocally established French as the only acceptable language within the schools, putting into law an earlier 6 June 1880 decree to that effect signed by then Minister of Education Jules Ferry (McDonald 1989: 39-40). As such, these centralization measures sought to further entrench the national presence in the peripheral French regions. By regaining control of the national education system, the Third Republic hoped to re-instill a threatened sense of national unity and allegiance and, in doing so, forestall social movements in the name of sub-national identity. Besides the Paris Commune and the Great Kabyle revolt, the years 1870-71 had seen the growth of separatist movements in the southeastern Occitan-speaking region. In September 1870, a group of associations representing rural and factory workers from thirteen *départements* formed the Ligue du Midi which publicly presented a series of demands ranging from job security to autonomous governance, but were crushed in the aftermath of the Paris Commune. In the waning days of the Third Republic, the French government actually passed legislation formally outlawing such separatism.<sup>11</sup>

However, as in the case of Algeria, such practical measures did not erase cultural differences within France, but rather accompanied the elaboration of various ethnic and linguistic categories. Like in Kabylia, nineteenth-century ethnologists and linguists were attracted to rural, peripheral areas like Finistère (Brittany) and Auvergne (Occitania) where supposedly pristine cultures, unsullied by modernity and industrialization, could be observed. These Third Republic scholars published ethnographies (Chevallier 1934, Le Goffic 1902), collected traditional songs and dances (Quellien 1889), and compiled dictionaries (Vallée 1980). These endeavors contributed largely to the outlining of essential cultural characteristics shared by the inhabitants of a given region and the attribution of such differences to natural racial categories or 'geniuses' (*génie d'oc* vs. *génie d'oil* for instance). Moreover, such folkloristic

11 The law of 23 May 1938 forbade "whosoever undertakes, in whatever fashion, to undermine the integrity of the national territory or to subtract from the authority of France a part of territory where this authority is exercised."

accounts were readily consumed by a late nineteenth century Parisian elite in the midst of a romantic artistic revolution in which an Occitan/Provençal literary renaissance, and particularly the poems of Frédéric Mistral, flourished. This romantic celebration of cultural difference should not be seen as contrary to French modernization, but rather as assimilation's determined opposite, part of the "ambivalence of modernity" (cf. Bauman 1991). Moreover, as in the Kabyle case, the perpetuation of a discourse of ethnic difference would later be mobilized within the regionalist movements themselves.

In this way, there exists a clear correlation between the ambivalent assimilation efforts within the metropole and those employed within the colonies (particularly Algeria), a continuity which has not been lost on contemporary ethnic activists who decry the Third Republic's policies of "internal colonialism" (cf. Sibé 1988).<sup>12</sup> In the rest of this article, I will discuss three particular moments in the realization of this similar position vis-à-vis the French nation-state and the formulation of a common political programme. Focusing on the period of decolonization, the early-1980s multicultural experiments, and the 1990s ascendancy of the extreme Right on fears over globalization, I will pinpoint the terms of convergence between immigrant and regionalist movements and their particular relationship with a unifying Europe.

## EUROPE AND ITS MINORITIES

In the previous section, I returned to the late-nineteenth century to demonstrate how national integration paralleled rather than succeeded the elaboration of sub-national categories of identity. In this section, I will show how these processes have remained unfinished and have over the last forty years transformed themselves in relation to a third, supra-national entity – Europe. A post-World War II phenomenon based largely on the elimination of colonial empires, European integration has altered the ways in which both national and regional, ethnic, or linguistic models of social organization could be practiced. The impact of this integration on the local level, like the effects of European and anti-colonial nationalisms, has a particular history which has only begun to be written (cf. Darian-Smith 1994). In highlighting the moments in which various types of minority difference within France have been publicly demonstrated in relation to other political categories of belonging, this section will demonstrate the multiple ways which a supra-national Europe has been incorporated into local cultural political debates (*Kulturkämpfe*).

### *Decolonization and National Identity: The Algerian War*

The Algerian War constituted a significant transformation in the internal organization of both the French and Algerian nation-states. Commencing before the dust had settled from Den Bien Phu, the 1954–62 war was not just about the national liberation of Algeria, but it was truly played out and understood as a civil war *within* France.<sup>13</sup> In a few short years, nearly four-fifths of France's territory was torn away, and the entire state

12 Alain Sibé, an Occitanian organizer and Marxist militant has emphasized that "it is necessary to underline the coincidence between [Ferry's] vigorous tactics of de-nationalization and colonial policy" (Sibé 1988: 34).

13 François Mitterand, then Minister of the Interior, stated in a speech given on 5 November 1954 during an official visit to the Aurès (Algeria): 'Algeria is France. And France will not recognize any other authority there but its own' (cited in Manceron and Remaoun 1993: 24).

apparatus of the Fourth Republic had been toppled, replaced (by a returned Charles De Gaulle), and then almost toppled again in an aborted coup d'état by an ultra-conservative faction of France's own military, the OAS (Organization of the Secret Army).

On the level of national identity, this extraction of the colonial South had two profound effects. Firstly, French government and populace alike actively participated in an official amnesia of the war and the colonial period in general.<sup>14</sup> Until recently, the war was not officially commemorated and its veterans were refused the status of *anciens combattants* with all the concomitant privileges. A recent survey of French youth born after the war indicates the extent of this 'non-memory': three-quarters could not indicate the duration of the war or the name of a single Algerian resistance leader (Manceron and Remaoun 1993: 82). Employing a series of amnesties of war criminals from both the revolutionary FLN and the reactionary OAS, the Fifth Republic thus made a concerted effort to turn the page on its imperial history. Secondly, this Renan-type historical forgetting was accompanied by an active forging of a new national project. Under the direction of De Gaulle, France turned its political orientation 180 degrees to the North, to the construction of an integrated and unified Europe (whose groundwork had been recently laid in the 1958 Treaty of Rome) (Fabre 1992). Pulling out of NATO and supporting Francophone secessionist movements in Quebec, France embarked on a new, post-colonial national trajectory as an independent player in the bipolar geopolitical system. In this regard, it would be fair to say that decolonization did not just create one new nation, but two.

However, the question remains: What kind of national entity could be constituted in the wake of this upheaval? What type of unifying myth could the nation-state imagine for itself and project to its citizens and the regional world? In Algeria, the National Liberation Front established the new state on the ideological basis that Algeria was historically Arab and naturally Islamic, thus portraying the revolution as a unified armed struggle of Muslims against Christians.<sup>15</sup> Armed with the now-famous rally-call, 'One hero, the people', the Algerian state has employed anodyne images of the war to forge national consensus around itself as the natural inheritor of revolutionary leadership. In doing so, the state sought to erase the memory of opposing forces from within the revolutionary front, from exterminated or exiled leaders like Abane Ramdane, Krim Belkacem, Mohammed Boudiaf, or Hocine Ait-Ahmed, to the role of expatriate and emigrant Algerians in the conflict (notably Messali Hadj, regarded by scholars as the true 'father' of Algerian nationalism), to the 'internal war' fought between the FLN and its rival, the Messalist National Algerian Movement (MNA) (Stora 1995, 1991).

Furthermore, this process of forgetting has related to the particular accommodation of internal ethnic and regional differences. During the 1940s, nationalist debates among the Algerian immigrant community in Paris centered around two opposing formulations for the future country: *Algérie arabe* (Arab Algeria) and *Algérie algérienne* (Algerian Algeria). The first saw in the nascent Muslim Arab nationalist movement of Egypt and Lebanon the true competitor to European colonialism, and sought to ally the revolutionary uprising to its ideological formulations and economic support. The

14 Benjamin Stora (1991) has explored this process of forgetting in great detail, along with its consequences for the younger generations in France.

15 The 1964 National Charter declared Islam to be the national religion and Arabic to be the national language. This formulation has been reiterated in subsequent constitutions, in spite of some concessions made to teaching of minority languages (Tamazight). The original formulation of this identity derives from the oft-quoted slogan of the 1930s proto-nationalist movement, the Jama'at al-'Ulama': "Islam is my religion, Algeria is my nation, and Arabic is my language."

second focused more particularly on the specificities of the Algerian populace, as pluri-religious (with indigenous Christians and Jews, as well as both Shi'a and Sunni Muslims) and pluri-ethnic (with a variety of Berber-speaking populations: Kabyles, Chaouis, Mzabs, and Touaregs). As this last group was composed primarily of immigrant Kabyles autoworkers, it became referred to as the 'Berber crisis', and in 1949 its members were expelled from Messali's pre-FLN party, the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Freedoms (MTLD). In subsequent years, other Kabyle revolutionary leaders, like Hocine Ait-Ahmed and Abane Ramdane would be systematically marginalized or assassinated for too openly demonstrating regional attachments. These tensions surfaced most directly in the immediate aftermath of independence, when Ait-Ahmed founded a rival party, the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) and led a two-year open revolt in Kabylia against the ethnic 'fascism' of the FLN of President Ahmed Ben Bella. While the revolt failed to have the widespread support of the 1871 insurrection, the FFS remained a strong oppositional (though unarmed) force to the Algerian regime in both Kabylia and in France even after Ait-Ahmed's arrest and flight to Europe in 1965.

The Algerian conflict had simultaneous and similar repercussions for regionalist movements in France. Already in 1920, as the Algerian nationalist movement was getting off the ground in the Renault and Citroën factories of Paris, the early Breton separatist movement, *Breiz Atao* (Britanny Forever), expressed overt support for liberation movements of indigenous peoples within the French colonies – with particular emphasis on Algeria – viewing their struggles as one and the same. However, by the 1930s, its leaders began to embrace the rising National Socialist party in Germany, and their visions of autonomy became increasingly racist, imagining an exclusive Celtic state free from Arab "contamination" (McDonald 1989: 122–123). During the Nazi occupation of France, the movement enjoyed overt support from both the German and Vichy leadership, garnering a degree of autonomy in the form of a Breton National Council in exchange for several regiments of troops wearing German uniforms. After the war, the movement was disbanded and over eight hundred of its members were executed for collaboration (Beer 1980: 14).

However, racial essentialism has been the exception rather than the norm in regionalist movements in France. More typically, regional movements have adopted overtly Marxist rhetoric in their discursive critiques of the French nation-state's internal colonialism (*colonialisme intérieur*) (cf. Sibé 1988). The Algerian War in particular served as a crystallizing moment for many Occitan and Breton militants in the radicalization of their political beliefs, taking on for themselves the image of the Algerian *fellagha* (peasant) (cf. Marti 1975: 70). On the eve of the Algerian victory and the fall of the Fourth Republic, a large number of regional nationalist organizations were founded throughout France, from the *Mouvement pour l'Organisation de la Bretagne* to the *Comité Occitan d'Études et d'Action* to the *Comité Corse pour l'Indépendance*, all following the example of the FLN and anticipating a possible power vacuum in Paris. Not to attribute full responsibility to the war, the Fourth Republic had already made certain concessions to the official recognition of minorities in France, with the 1951 Loi Deixonne allowing both the teaching of regional dialects as part of a university degree curriculum and the use of these languages in French language instruction. Hence, an institutional forum did already exist for potential student-activists to gather, debate issues, and mobilize support. Moreover, organic intellectuals within the ethnic movements, like the Occitan scholar Robert Lafont, did recognize that significant differences separated the plight of a colonized Muslim Algerian and a Breton Frenchman, namely that the latter enjoyed full political and civil rights (Lafont 1967:

141). Finally, the true radicalization of the ethnic movements in terms of its use of public strikes, demonstrations, and bombings (particularly in the Breton and Corsican case) occurred after the May 1968 student-led 'events'. Nonetheless, due largely to the Algerian War, decolonization became the general lens through which ethnic movements in France interpreted their struggle.

In this way, the war provoked debates over the place of ethno-linguistic heterogeneity within the nation-state on both sides of the Mediterranean. Like in Algeria, the French Fifth Republic searched for motifs through which to present its post-imperial identity. De Gaulle's overt turn to Europe, his support for the European Coal and Steel Community and later the Common Market, and his renewed alliance with Germany constituted one set of re-centerings, though his support of the Quebec liberation movement countered it. Such ambivalence between regional integration and national determination can likewise be seen in his wavering support for the Loi Deixonne and the teaching of regional dialects in the national education system. In any event, it is consistently these early years after decolonization that scholars have isolated as witnessing the 'rebirth' of ethnic activism (cf. Beer 1980: 40).

#### *Multicultural Experiments of the Early-1980s*

The ambivalence of the French nation-state between the practice of unity and diversity, of universalism and particularism, altered with the rise of the socialist government in the early-1980s and its experiments with multicultural models. In the first few years of its tenure, the French socialist party devised a series of decentralization policies which would encourage and support minority and regionalist cultures in France. Speaking in Lorient just prior to his 1981 presidential election, François Mitterrand defended the 'right to difference' as a universal human right (Giordan 1982: 7). This amounted to a redefinition of French national unity through the lens of multicultural and multilingual diversity. In his preface to a programmatic report entitled *La France au pluriel* ("A Plural France"), Mitterrand commented that, "we profoundly believe that if France must be united, she must also be rich in her differences. Her unity has enabled our country; respecting her diversity will prevent her undoing. One and diverse, that is France" (Parti Socialiste 1981: 10).<sup>16</sup> While continuing to invest in a unitary national education system, the government expanded the Loi Deixonne and offered increased financial support to independent cultural associations of both immigrant and regional origin.

This transformation can be seen most directly in reference to the 'Beur Movement'. In 1981, Mitterrand lifted a ban on immigrant associations which dated back to the anti-fascist and anti-separatist laws of the late-1930s. In the wake of this reform, a number of second-generation North African immigrants initiated a series of stylized cultural practices and associations ranging from radio stations, musical groups, newspapers, and auto-biographical novels, to grass-roots development organizations. While a number of these projects were designed to combat practical problems involved with life in suburban ghettos – repairing dilapidated housing projects or providing after-school tutoring for local youth – others focused more directly on the re-appropriation of immigrant cultural histories marginalized in official versions of French unity. These activities not only received overt government support in terms of flexible funding, but

<sup>16</sup> "Nous croyons profondément que si la France doit être unie, elle est aussi riche de ses différences. Son unité a fait notre pays, le respect de sa diversité empêchera qu'il se défasse. Une et diverse, voici la France."

they also were prominently displayed in photographic and live performance forms at the Georges Pompidou cultural center in Paris in 1983 (CCI 1984).

However, the Beur Movement did not limit itself to artistic and developmental forms easily assimilated into liberal theories of multiculturalism, but also involved a detailed critique of the French 'motor of integration'. During the 1983–86 period, a number of 'Beurs'<sup>17</sup> organized and participated in a series of anti-racist political marches and demonstrations for racial equality and civic rights, rights which they felt *de facto* denied under French meritocratic principles. Moreover, in a series of autobiographical novels, many Beur authors expressed a profound awareness and resentment of the structural contradiction in which their experiences in a school system where they were taught to be unambiguously 'French' ran headlong against everyday racist attitudes in which they were informed they were necessarily foreign (*étranger*) or 'Arab'. The authors consistently (though differently) expressed that in fact they were somehow both and neither, somewhere "between two cultures, two histories, two skin colors, neither black nor white, inventing [their] own roots..." (Charef 1983: 17).<sup>18</sup> Expressing this hybridity, Nacer Kettane, organizer of the 1985 demonstration for civic rights and president of Radio Beur, declared: "Mutants torn from the 'McDonalds couscous-steak-fries society', we are here whether you want us or not!" (Kettane 1986: 19).

While these demonstrations and declarations amounted primarily to an avowal of hybridity, of a self-distancing from both North African and French cultures, as the prime element of Beur identity, the Beur movement remained nonetheless closely associated with the Berber cultural movement as it was unfolding in both Algeria and France during this same period. In the Spring of 1980, a lecture on early Berber poetry to be given at the University of Tizi-Ouzou (Kabylia) was canceled by the Algerian authorities, leading to a month-long set of student riots and general strikes which spread throughout Algeria to Paris. The demonstrators, like in the Beur case, demanded the official recognition of Berber linguistic and cultural differences within the new government's modernization programs. This social movement had great influence among the majority Kabyle population within the larger Algerian immigrant community in France, and a number of cultural associations were founded in its wake. Through the establishment of Berber dance repertoires, theater troupes, and language classes, these associations reached out to the immigrant second-generation physically separated from Kabylia and its particular cultural-political situation. This transnational movement built on a longer history of political activism among expatriate Kabyle intellectuals who since the late 1960s had used Paris as a pole of cultural and literary production from which to exert pressure on the Algerian government. However, in its conjoining with the wider Beur Movement of the early-1980s, this activism reached a larger, younger population to which it connected through a commonality of cause. Like the Beurs, Berber activists promoted a hybrid, medial cultural identity, as being consummately Mediterranean, somewhere between Arab and French along the racial schema of the Kabyle Myth. Indeed, many informants have commented in this regards that even the appellation, 'Beur', probably derives in part from a conjunction of the term 'Berbères d'Europe' (Silverstein 1996). In such a way, the opening of avenues for the public expression of ethnic and linguistic difference in France by the Socialist legislation did not necessarily

17 A self-designation employed by second-generation North Africans during this period. It likely derives from an idiomatic inversion of 'Arab'.

18 "Entre deux cultures, deux histoires, deux couleurs de peau, ni blanc ni noir, à s'inventer ses propres racines..." For similar formulations, see Begag 1986; Boukhedenna 1987.

result in the better integration of immigrant populations into the French nation-state, but rather in many cases to their closer attachment to communities existing outside of the state's territorial and imaginative borders.

Likewise, while Breton and Occitan activists also benefited from the tentative government support for multiculturalism, they remained sharply critical of the French nation-state and instead sought direct ties with other ethnic and linguistic minority populations via burgeoning European supranational bodies. The approach of regionalist groups to these European institutions has been historically ambiguous. On the one hand, these bodies represented for the groups in question the quintessence of capitalist development, in that they generally served to protect state economic interests against internal and external competitors. The insertion of the French economy into the Common Market has often, in the eyes of many militants, destroyed small businesses and farms, as technocratic decisions made in Brussels were unadapted to local economies, such as the wine industry in Occitania (Touraine et al. 1981: 103). However, at the same time, by countering French nationalism and neo-colonialism, entrance into Europe remained a positive hope for regional development (Alcouffe et al. 1979: 7). In 1974, the European Parliament established the European Fund for Regional Development (FEDER) in order to finance industrial projects within underdeveloped regions. While originally the funds were distributed through a quota system to member states who then could allocate the monies as they saw fit, a series of reforms in 1984–85 allowed for a greater ability of local collectivities to have their dossiers directly examined by the funding bodies. In Brittany alone, over 1.7 billion francs were received for 500 different projects between 1974 and 1984 (Quéméré 1986: 63).

The early-1980s French socialist legislation was actually antedated by a number of European resolutions in support of linguistic and cultural rights of numerical minorities within member states. As early as 1961, the Council of Europe recommended the adoption of a supplementary article to the European Convention on Human Rights stipulating that "Persons belonging to a minority... cannot be prohibited their right... to have their own cultural life, to use their own language, to open their own schools, and to be educated in the language of their choice" (cited in Giordan 1982: 14). These intentions were reiterated in subsequent years in the Helsinki Accords (1975) and in the initial conference of European cultural ministers in Oslo (1976). Finally, in October 1981, as the socialist reforms were getting off the ground in France, the European Parliament similarly passed a resolution to establish a EC charter on regional languages and cultures and minority ethnic rights (Giordan 1982: 24). As such, Mitterrand's declarations appear very much as a response to reform movements already initiated at a larger, supranational level, rather than an innovation appealing particularly to the specificity of the French case.

Regional groups in France responded to these declarations by organizing large conferences throughout France throughout the 1980–81 period, bringing together a plurality of association within each of the six major indigenous cultural regions of France: Brittany, Occitania, Catalonia, Alsace, Flanders, and Basque country. In addition, these meetings were supplemented by a series of inter-regional congresses held throughout France and Europe, uniting various ethnic activists from different 'minorities' in an attempt to present their demands in a united fashion. These congresses drew inspiration from a series of earlier such joint meetings particularly held between Basque and Breton cultural associations during the early-1970s (Sibé 1988: 148). Often, such demonstrations of inter-regional support have followed lines of imagined kinship, as in the case of the pan-Celtic conferences held regularly between groups from Brittany, Cornwall, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, or in terms of ethnic

movements which cross state borders, such as the case of the Catalans and the Basques. However, the more general tendency to unify demands internationally and present individual demands to European bodies (as in the case of Occitan groups directly petitioning the European Parliament in 1982 for official linguistic recognition in France) has been enabled largely by the elaboration of European institutions and their declarations in favor of cultural rights. This development, abetted by the active role of French statesman in architecting inter-state economic and political unions, thus effectively downgraded the role of the French nation-state in regulating its own internal diversity and allowed for sub-national groups to form lasting trans-national connections. As Robert Lafont concluded in 1978, "It has now become clear that [Occitania's future] is no longer only a regional affair, or even a French one, but rather one of Europe" (Alcouffe et al. 1979: 199).<sup>19</sup>

### *Globalization and Terrorism*

As I discussed in the last section, the socialist government's attempts to reconstruct the French national imaginary along multicultural lines contributed to the opening up of new avenues of trans-regional and trans-national unity which defied the limits of state national territory. These connections only increased apace over the next fifteen years, due to cultural political events occurring both internally and externally to France. While in the 1980s, immigrant and regional groups in France were beginning to forge connections with spatially-distant others defined generally in terms of (real or fictive) kinship (Beurs and Berbers, Bretons and Welsh), by the mid-1990s, the connections transcended such considerations, with highly disparate immigrant and regional groups conjoining their efforts against extreme nationalist incursions. As I will indicate in this section, this unity has been directly related to a discursive shift from the language of universal rights to an explicit critique of the French nation-state as the hegemonical sovereign form.

In the first place, this transformation is witnessed by the breakdown in the socialist poster-boy Beur Movement. Over the last ten years, this multiform social movement has taken on a greater ethnic and religious character, corresponding more and more closely to partisan lines drawn on the other side of the Mediterranean. Two significant events underlie this change. The first concerns the appropriation of the anti-racist, 'right to difference' discourse by extreme-right, xenophobic groups. In what has been termed 'differentialist racism' or 'neo-racism' (Balibar 1991; Gilroy 1990), groups like the Front National adopted a version of apartheid which relativized cultural differences while submitting that any violation of the boundaries separating them would give rise to inimical ethnic conflict. Employing the pseudo-scientific concept of *seuil de tolérance* ('tolerance threshold'),<sup>20</sup> Jean-Marie Le Pen publicly commented on a 1992 anti-racist poster declaring, "Integration is like a motorcycle, a *mélange* [of fuels] is required," by adding, "Yes, but above four-percent it blows the motor" (*Le Monde*, January 22, 1992: 6). The final step in the differentialist logic amounted to the proposed repatriation of

19 "Il devient maintenant clair qu'elle n'est plus une affaire de régions seulement, ni même de France, mais d'Europe."

20 This was originally formulated as an abstract generalization by University of Chicago sociologists in the 1960s. Observing the interactions of various racially and socio-economically diverse groups within inner-city work and living environments, they set a 'tipping point' of ten-percent above which they claimed the relative minority population seemed to provoke a negative psychological reaction from the majority, ending often in open conflict.

each immigrant group to their 'natural milieu', for this, according to the argument, would be far more fair and equitable than having them remain in a foreign environment, subject to 'natural', unavoidable racist violence. Or, if such a repatriation is not possible, as in the case of the Beurs, the discourse prescribes their radical separation from the French nation.

This appropriation of the 'right to difference' thus called into question one of the main discursive tenets behind the Beur Movement. Beur leaders reacted to this problem in several different ways. On the one hand, those especially close to the Socialist party, like Harlem Désir, leader of SOS-Racisme, began to call for a 'right to resemblance' (*droit à la ressemblance*) and adopt largely assimilationist models of identification (Désir 1987). Associations like SOS-Racisme, France-Plus, Movement Against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples (MRAP), Culture et Liberté Ile-de-France, Association of the New Immigrant Generation (ANGI) and others which emerged unscathed from the Beur Movement continue to operate today on a practical 'here-and-now' ideology. While multi-ethnic in membership and highly critical of the xenophobic extreme right, these groups remain non-political in character, preferring to work directly with state and municipal agencies (like the Inter-Ministerial Urban Delegation) to promote an equality of opportunity in the housing and employment sectors for youth of immigrant origin. In discussions with leaders of these groups, I was informed that they eschewed any cultural politics which could imply a detachment of immigrant populations from the French nation-state, and that their support of 'culture' tended to be on the level of folklore and art.

On the other hand, a large number of other former 'Beurs' took the opposite tact, embracing essentialist forms of identity and engaging in projects more linked to political situations abroad. Many with whom I spoke expressed a feeling of betrayal by Beur leaders who had used their anti-racist activities to underwrite their political or commercial affairs. For them, the multiculturalism of the Beur Movement proved to be a ruse which, in the face of extant institutionalized racism, left Franco-Algerians only more culturally schizophrenic and socio-economically excluded. Largely in response to this sense of failure, a large number of Islamic and Berber associations have been founded in urban France over the last five years, and these groups have had success recruiting among younger second- and third-generation Franco-Algerians (Pujadas and Salam 1995; Silverstein 1996). One figure, that of Toumi Djaidja, the Lyonais community organizer and symbolic leader of the 1983 *Marche des Beurs*, became a national symbol and often referenced example of this trajectory when he formally adopted ultra-conservative Islamic practices after a brief prison term in 1993.

Moreover, this turn away from the multicultural declarations of the Beur Movement towards essentialized ethno-religious categories largely corresponds to the radicalization of the Algerian situation and the increasing politicization of Islamic and Berber identities in Algeria. Since the declaration of martial law in 1992, Algeria has suffered a devastating civil war in which at least 70,000 people have been killed in fighting between Islamist armed groups and government military forces. In addition, Berber groups have positioned themselves as a third interest, profiting from the relative political vacuum to establish a virtual autonomy in Kabylia (replete with village auto-defense forces) and to increase their demands for the officialization of the standardized Berber language (Tamazight) as a national language on par with Arabic. Appealing to Western powers, they have employed favorable stereotypes from the Kabyle Myth to posit themselves not only as primordial and ante-Islamic, but also as democratic and hence *anti-Islamist* (as political Islam has been generally associated in Europe with fascism and terrorism). In France, Berber associations have argued their legitimacy to

governmental funding agencies on exactly the premise that, by emphasizing cultural over religious identities, they can draw disenfranchised youth from a trajectory which, as in the case of Toumi Djaidja, has led many to fundamentalism. One of the founding members of a Berber cultural group in Mantes-la-Jolie explained to me that the decision to found their organization derived from their sudden awareness that a large number of their younger North African friends and acquaintances were beginning to frequent Islamist associations which had taken up residence in basement prayer rooms of public housing buildings.

In particular, two events demonstrate the ways in which the Algerian struggle has definitively crossed the Mediterranean. In the first place, demonstrations, electioneering, and political rallies for Algerian causes have come to mobilize more public support within the immigrant community than regional or national debates marked as distinctly 'French'. This can be seen most particularly in the voting participation differential between the April 1995 French presidential elections and the November 1995 Algerian ones. The high immigrant voter turnout in the latter case was largely enabled by the existence of active branches of all the major Algerian political parties in France and their increasingly intimate relation with immigrant cultural associations. In the Berber case, the two major Kabyle associations in Paris, the Association de Culture Berbère (ACB) and Tamazgha, are directly affiliated with the two rival political parties drawing their electoral base from Kabylia, the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) and the Socialist Forces Front (FFS), with whom they share similar political visions for France and Algeria (Silverstein 1996). In my interviews with community organizers and party members on the eve of the election, I was informed just how crucial the immigrant vote was for the future of Algeria and Algerians in France. For ACB/RCD leaders, it was a chance for Algerians of all sorts (Kabyle or Arab) to take a tough 'eradicator' stance against an Islamic fundamentalism that, if left unchecked, would eventually eliminate political and cultural freedom globally. For Tamazgha/FFS supporters, the elections were a fraud that would only result in the legitimization of a military dictator who was avowedly against minority rights.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, the transnationalization of Algerian cultural politics to France has also taken on more violent forms, particularly in the bombings of train stations and schools in Paris and Lyon over the summer and autumn of 1995. While these acts of violence were largely disavowed by the vast majority of French Algerians and Muslims, they did receive logistic support from small militant groups in France adhering to the radical Islamist tenets of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA), including one 'Beur' from the Lyonnais suburb of Vaulx-en-Velin, Khaled Kelkal. For the French media and government, this example proved the existence of an extensive international network of Islamic extremism supposedly stretching from Algiers to Cologne to Sarajevo to Kabul through France's immigrant suburbs. To counter this perceived threat to state security, the French government took emergency steps (the 'Vigipirate' plan) to reinforce its internal and external borders, thus delaying the institution of the Schengen accords and the creation of a transnational European political (or police) space. Moreover, the plan reinforced an already expanded police force with military personnel who over the next

21 The FFS had previously signed a treaty at Saint-Egidio (Italy) with the FLN and the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) to boycott the elections. In the end, the Army general Liamine Zeroual was elected with 65% of the popular vote (over 70% voter turnout). While he originally made overtures to the support of Berber rights and the teaching of Tamazight, he later reneged on these promises and reiterated Arabic's position as the sole official and national language of Algeria.

three months perpetrated over three million identity checks, a number of police round-ups of suspected Islamist sympathizers, and a series of forced repatriations of illegal immigrants. The result of these practices was the popular and institutional amalgamation of the categories of immigration, Islam, and terrorism.

The paradox of these measures is that they contradict and impede Republican ideologies and policies aimed at culturally reproducing the French nation-state, in that, as we have seen, they exacerbate the further retrenchment of second-generation groups into categories of belonging drawn directly from Algeria. Instead of fostering communal integration *cum* assimilation or advancing a 'new citizenship' (*nouvelle citoyennité*) along multicultural lines (cf. Wihtol de Wenden 1988), recent anti-terrorism measures have led to new exclusions, mapping out internal boundaries of national belonging which have effectively opposed those of Muslim faith to a Catholic majority defending their own religious values under the umbrella of state secularism. As we have seen in the history of Breton activism, the Republican state has only in recent memory disengaged itself definitively from the Catholic Church, after over a century of conflicts and compromises.<sup>22</sup> In general, the principles of state secularism relegate religious expression to the private sphere, though in practice they have tolerated signs of individual faith in public establishments, like schools. In attributing the 1995 bombings to a group defined by its religion, the French state has in effect condemned French Islam as a whole for violating this new, implicit Concordat and forcing its beliefs onto the public sphere. As such, constructing a mosque or wearing a headscarf in school becomes suspect in ways that church-raising and crucifixes never have been.<sup>23</sup> In making this distinction, the conservative government has effectively re-defined the French nation-state along neo-racist lines, treating non-Catholic, non-Gallic internal (religious or regional) difference as inherently threatening, as having the potential for subversion or terrorism.

This retrenchment into univocal ethno-culturalist narratives of French national identity is further related to larger debates provoked by France's economic and political integration into the European Community. For, the rise of nationalist sentiment in France has as much to do with base economic, political, and cultural fears of the immigrant Other, as it does with a more general uncertainty over France's role in a borderless Europe. This is certainly true of small farmers and shopkeepers inhabiting regions not particularly affected by immigration patterns, but who would likely be forced to alter their practices with the withdrawal of French protectionism. For these social actors, the threat derives primarily from East of the Rhine, and not South of the Mediterranean. Nonetheless, their tacit if not electoral support for Euroskeptic parties like the Front National lends credence to the growth of anti-immigrant policies and serves indirectly to radicalize the identity politics which today constitute the major challenge to the sovereign integrity of the French nation-state.

However, the interaction between a unifying Europe and post-colonial immigration need not be solely inimical or oppositional in its implications. For, while it is true that the weakening of inter-European borders has implied the strengthening of extra-European ones, the parallel growth of supranational European bodies, like the European Court or the European Parliament, has actually served in many cases to protect the rights of immigrant and refugee populations. On the one hand, this has occurred through

22 The law of 9 December 1905 officially ended Napoleon's famous Concordat with the clergy, withdrawing all public funding from religious institutions.

23 The legitimacy of mosques and headscarves in France have each been the subject of heady political debate over the last ten years. For further details on the 'Headscarf Affair,' see Auslander 1997; Beriss 1990.

common agreements to smooth out national differences in citizenship and naturalization legislation, changes which have encouraged strict *jus sanguinis* nations like Germany to adopt more lenient *jus solis* policies (cf. Brubaker 1992). On the other hand, these European institutions have provided forums for immigrant communities themselves to initiate change. Already in 1994, under the guise of the '13th Nation', non-European immigrant groups throughout Europe jointly appealed to the European parliament for independent representation (Kastoryano 1994).

More recently, Berber groups based in Europe, representing populations throughout North Africa and the diaspora, have likewise addressed letters, petitions, and speeches to the United Nations, UNESCO, and the European Parliament demanding the official recognition and teaching of Berber culture in individual countries like Algeria and France. In one case, the Granada-based umbrella group, 'Mediterranean', succeeded in organizing a special session of the European Parliament on Berber (*Amazigh*) culture held on June 11, 1997. In preparation for this session, the organizers solicited specific proposals using the various internet talk groups, Amazigh-Net and Soc.Cult.Berber which have for the last five years served as forums for political and cultural debate among Berber populations resident throughout the world. Using similar means of publication, another Paris-based group succeeded in procuring European funds to help finance the first World Amazigh Conference held in August 1997 in the Canary Islands. The conference expects to receive representatives from Berber associations located across the globe, from North Africa to France to Sweden to North America, many of whom have already been active in its planning and promoting.

If European immigrant groups appear to have followed the inspiration of the French regionalist movement in utilizing Europe as a court of appeals against individual nation-states, such a tactical overlap has been by no means incidental. Over the last several years, immigrant issues in France have been directly united with larger European ones of minority populations. Since their inception in the early-1980s, the yearly musical '*Fête du Peuple Breton*' ('Festival of Breton People') organized by the Breton Democratic Union (UDB) has invited artists and artisans from other French regions, from across the Channel, as well as from former North African colonies. Nevertheless, in spite of this opening, the organizers continued to place the emphasis on Breton culture (McDonald 1989: 151). However, this emphasis has been altered in recent manifestations of the related Douarnenez film festival, held annually in Brittany. Focusing since 1978 on one or more regional European linguistic or ethnic groups (Bretons, Basques, Celts, etc.), the 1994 and 1996 versions were devoted to 'Berbers' and 'Immigrant Communities' respectively. This last year's event featured films produced by Algerians in France, Turks in Germany, and Pakistanis in Britain, as well as offering lectures and debates animated by prominent leaders within the respective immigrant communities and providing space for immigrant organizations to promote their causes and interact amongst themselves. While Breton films were still shown in these festivals, they took a peripheral place to the focus group's endeavors.

Likewise, as mentioned in the introduction to this paper, immigrant groups in France have similarly begun to open their conferences and festivals to regional minority groups in Europe. During its 1996 commemoration of the Berber Spring, a Parisian suburbs based Berber group, the Berber Cultural Movement-France (MCB-France), composed primarily of second-generation Franco-Kabyles in their twenties, invited two Occitan scholars/activists to participate in a round-table discussion concerning the 'Amazigh Question in 1996'. While the room was decked with Kabyle flags and maps, and while the majority of interventions addressed aspects of Berber identity and the place of *Tamazight* (Berber language) in France and Algeria, the Occitanians attempted to relate

these questions to the larger issue of minoritized languages in the French metropole. In particular, Jean-François Blanc, director of the one the oldest Occitan cultural organizations, the Institute of Occitan Studies (founded 1944), centered his discussion on a critique of the nation-state as an instrument of homogenization. Warning the Berber activists about the initial support of the interim Algerian government for the teaching of Tamazight, Blanc concluded that "the [Occitan] experience with regards to the central State shows that we cannot count on it." Just as Occitan activists took heed of Algerian revolutionaries during the wars of decolonization, so now are they returning the favor of experience in the post-colonial period.

In this way, the joint action of non-commensurable 'minority' groups in France has largely predicated itself on a critique of the nation-state as an agent of homogenization and cultural destruction. In a tract distributed five months after the conference, on the eve of the referendum of an Algerian constitution which, as Blanc had predicted, betrayed the Berber populations by once again reiterating the 'Algeria, Arabic, Islam' national triad, the MCB-France levied its definitive disavowal of traditional state structures: "The rupture with the concept of the nation-state, 'one language, one culture, one school,' elsewhere paradoxically defended until now by a large number of militants, is today a necessity."<sup>24</sup> What remains is to work through larger, more decentralized bodies, like the imagined *Tamazgha* (Barbary),<sup>25</sup> or the more concrete Europe. But which Europe? A 'Europe of Regions', answers the Occitan militan Robert Lafont, for a 'Europe of States' has only aided and abetted member states in the persecution of regionalist groups accused of state subversion – such as the support given by the EC to Spain in resolving the "Basque problem" (Alcouffe 1979: 102). The former, popular definition of Europe remains a promise: "The reality of today's Europe has transformed our geopolitical situation. We were on the periphery. We can become, if we want, axes, pivotal regions" (Sibé 1988).<sup>26</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have sought to demonstrate the ambivalence of the French nation-state's management of ethno-racial and linguistic difference and how in both colonial and post-colonial times it has simultaneously avowed and disavowed – produced and erased – sub-national categories of identity. By focusing on the joint participation of state actors and subaltern leaders in the elaboration of ethnic stereotypes and myths, the paper has attempted to undermine assumptions of primordiality rampant within structural functionalist approaches to the nation-state and its discontents (cf. Beer 1980: 42). Further, the paper has attempted to demonstrate a close relation between such cultural production and changing modes of political contestation. Most significantly for the contemporary period, there has occurred a series of shifts in the imagination of internal and external boundaries, as the contours of the French political imaginary alternately

24 "La rupture avec le concept de l'Etat-Nation: 'une langue, une culture, une école...' par ailleurs paradoxalement défendu jusqu'... présent par un grand nombre de militants, est aujourd'hui une nécessité."

25 This refers to a maximal conception of the historical Berber-speaking world, ranging from Libya to the Canary Islands, and including all significant pockets of contemporary Berber-speaking populations (Paris, Quebec, etc.).

26 "à la réalité de l'Europe d'aujourd'hui a transformé notre situation géopolitique. Nous étions la périphérie, nous pouvons être, si nous le voulons, des axes, des régions charnières."

expand and contract to encompass a colonial Empire or a unified Europe. For both the Algerian immigrant community and regional groups alike, these changes have outlined new possibilities for the enactment of civil society. From electioneering to jointly petitioning the Council of Europe, French citizens of 'minority' linguistic or ethnic origin have been able to articulate an identity politics which reaches beyond the confines of 'assimilation' to French Republican norms. While this transnationalization has on occasion abetted the growth of religious or ethnic extremisms, it has more often encouraged the expansion of minority rights and tolerance.

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