

**FPS**

**Volume 5, Number 2**

**SPECIAL ISSUE:**

**FRANCE IN A POSTCOLONIAL  
EUROPE: IDENTITY, HISTORY,  
MEMORY**

Edited by Charles Forsdick and  
David Murphy



**SOCIETY FOR FRANCOPHONE  
POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES**

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**Autumn/Winter 2007**

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**Edited by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy**

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### Editorial: Why 'Francophone Postcolonial Studies'?

Despite the impact of postcolonial theory on different academic disciplines over recent decades, the insight it can provide with regard to Francophone studies has yet to be fully assessed. Equally, the contribution that French and Francophone studies can make, and indeed have made, to a postcolonial theory largely perceived as Anglophone frequently remains unexplored.

By providing a forum for postcolonial perspectives, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* aims to promote theoretically driven, analytical studies of the Francophone world, which both question and reinvigorate the more established fields of French and postcolonial studies. The privileging of the postcolonial is in no way intended to imply that Francophone cultural production will be approached according to a single theoretical framework. On the contrary, *FPS* acknowledges the different theoretical trends within this multidisciplinary field, and believes that the complexity of postcolonial theory is best served by encouraging a variety of approaches. This theoretical complexity and multidisciplinaryity is, in turn, ideally suited to studying Francophone cultural production, which is frequently situated at the intersection of different historical, linguistic and social phenomena where synthesis is neither desirable nor possible.

As outlined in the first number, *FPS* envisages an approach that highlights a distinctive but reciprocal relationship between Francophone studies and postcolonial studies. We would like to invite contributions on any topic related to Francophone postcolonial studies for inclusion in future issues. Suggestions for themed issues to be co-ordinated by guest editors are also welcome. Authors should submit two copies of their article, of 6,000 words maximum, in English or in French, to a member of the editorial team (full contact details are given below). Articles should conform in presentation to the guidelines in the *MHRA Stylebook*, providing references in footnotes, rather than the

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## Introduction: The Postcolonial Turn in France

Over the past three years the term 'postcolonial' has finally elbowed its way into the mainstream of both academic and public debate in France after almost two decades during which it was either understood as a (profoundly problematic) chronological marker of what comes after Empire, or considered a byword for 'Anglo-Saxon' multiculturalism/ communitarianism (and seen thus, almost by definition, to be inherently anti-universalist and anti-Republican). What is perhaps most striking about this emerging postcolonial debate is that it has focused primarily on historico-political matters, whereas in the Anglophone world, postcolonial studies remains by and large (if by no means exclusively), the preserve of literature and cultural studies departments.<sup>1</sup> While many French literary scholars remain largely suspicious of (when not completely hostile towards) postcolonial approaches to literature, it is recent historical and political writing that has engaged with the notion of the 'postcolonial' in a sustained fashion (although often in a manner that reveals a lack of awareness of the complexity and subtlety of the postcolonial debate as it has developed in English-language as well as other contexts).<sup>2</sup> This is perhaps unsurprising, as this postcolonial

<sup>1</sup> A fascinating example of this 'inversion' is the decision to change the title of Neil Lazarus' edited volume, *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), the recent French translation of which became *Penser le postcolonial* (Paris: Amsterdam, 2006): moreover, the text is often catalogued in bookshops alongside historical works on colonialism rather than with literary criticism (itself a reflection on prevailing attitudes towards these disciplines in the respective language zones).

<sup>2</sup> Witness the rancorous debates between French and British-based literary scholars on the field of postcolonial studies in *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 4.2 (2006).

debate—as well as its wider social repercussions—has constantly been fuelled by controversial and occasionally violent episodes in which links between the present and a colonial past have explicitly been acknowledged or evoked. It is for this reason, as several of the contributors to this special issue underline, that 2005 has widely been viewed as the starting point for this process: early in the year, the publication of the manifesto of the self-proclaimed *Indigènes de la République* coincided almost exactly with the now infamous *loi du 23 février*, which called for ‘la reconnaissance des bienfaits de la colonisation française’; then, at the close of the year, the suburbs of many French towns and cities exploded in violence following the deaths of two adolescents of (African) immigrant descent, prompting the government to grant prefects the power to impose a curfew based on a law dating from the Algerian War of Independence. These events coincided with the publication of a number of high-profile academic works, most notably *La Fracture coloniale*, co-edited by members of the ACHAC collective, which explicitly called for France to address its colonial heritage and to acknowledge the afterlives of Empire still present, if not always apparent, in French culture, society and politics. It would be wrong, however, to view 2005 as a year in which an awareness of the postcolonial suddenly emerged in France—the serious recognition of long-denied memories of colonialism had been apparent since the late 1990s, not least in the context of debates concerning reparations for slavery or the acknowledgement of the use of torture during the Algerian War of Independence; rather, 2005 appears to encapsulate a moment when various factors—political context, specific publishing ventures, unexpected incidents—conspired to place the issue of France’s colonial heritage at the centre of public debate.

The four essays in this special issue all, in different ways, attempt to take stock of the rapidly moving events of the past three years and to pinpoint key questions that have emerged from this turbulent period. In the opening article, Tyler Stovall situates

engagement with France’s colonial past within the wider context of challenges by a new generation of historians to uniquely ‘white’ versions of European history. In the subsequent pieces, Adlai Murdoch, Joshua Cole and Charles Forsdick engage more centrally with recent French history and the ways in which the significance of France’s colonial past has been acknowledged, interrogated or denied. What all four contributions outline is the potential contribution of postcolonial criticism, inflected *à la française* and developed for an understanding of the wider French-speaking world, to a reframing of the ways—in terms of history and geography, as well as conceptual or even epistemological assumptions—in which we elaborate and structure knowledge about France. Firstly, as the recent resurgence of a previously sublimated colonial memory makes clear, the casting of the Evian Accords as a clean-break with the past is no longer tenable. Joshua Cole focuses on the example cited above relating to the adoption, during the upheaval of November 2005, of legislation first enacted in the context of the Algerian War of Independence. There are other clear examples of the deployment of colonial solutions to address post-colonial challenges: Jacques Chirac’s response to the constitutional crisis in 1980s Kanaky with a complete militarization of the territory depended, for instance, on the *nomadisation* of troops that had been central to French military action in Algeria in the 1950s. The arguments of the editors and authors of *La Fracture coloniale* have often been parodied by their critics, who saw the book as an attempt to reduce the problems of the postcolonial present to explanations belonging to the colonial past. The essays in that important collection illustrate instead a more complex genealogy, dependent not on any such simplistic narrative of cause and effect, but rather on the complex imbrications of the colonial past in the postcolonial (or neo-colonial) present. Equally important is the issue of geography and the acknowledgment—underpinning all the articles in this issue, but particularly apparent in Tyler Stovall’s contribution—that any

restriction of France to a hexagonal frame ultimately stunts our understanding of the country, and of its history, society, politics and culture. In re-reading France in this way within a postcolonial frame, the articles in this issue contribute to the re-definitional project outlined by Matthias Middel (and alluded to by Charles Forsdick in his contribution below), that of moving from the political project of *la francophonie* towards an understanding of what might provisionally be labelled a postcolonial 'francophonía', cast as a 'world region held together by historical events, [by] the binding strength of joint common experiences and places of remembrance'.<sup>3</sup> Finally, and closely associated with this recasting of historical and geographical frames, the rethinking of France as a constitutive element of a globalized, postcolonial world challenges more fundamentally our conceptual assumptions, and calls into question more generally the ways in which we construct knowledge about France and the wider French-speaking world. That the contributors to this issue offer openly outsider perspectives—three from the United States of America, one from Great Britain—underlines the ambiguous location of a specifically 'Francophone' postcolonial studies. On the one hand, the range of contributors reveals a particular perspective, associated with the almost 'ethnographic' dimension more widely associated with

<sup>3</sup> See Matthias Middel, 'Francophonía as a World Region?', *European Review of History*, 10.2 (2003), 203-20 (p. 205). This criticism of *la francophonie* is, of course, a long-standing project, common among many 'Francophone' authors from France's former colonies (or existing DOM-ROMs) who refuse conscription to its political agendas. The recent publication of 'Pour une "littérature-monde" en français (*Le Monde des Livres*, 16 March 2007) and the associated collection of essays, *Pour une littérature-monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), edited by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud, reveal a sharpening of positions and an extension of this critique, suggesting the need for the decolonization of the epithet 'francophone' to include metropolitan France itself (although there is, in some of their arguments, a troubling lack of awareness of earlier challenges to the binary relationship between France and its Francophone 'others').

French studies (and French historical studies) in the non-French-speaking world.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, however, there is an essential responsibility to ensure—as we are reminded by the contributions below—that such an approach does not become an exclusively outsider activity, risking the pitfalls of self-congratulation and even those of blindness to the implications of our research for the national contexts in which we teach and operate as scholars ourselves.

A successful globalized research practice neither entrenches nor grinds down the distinctions and divergences between different scholarly traditions; instead, it should encourage them to enter into dialogue, permitting connections and possible synergies where otherwise there exist dislocations and misunderstandings. We highlight the risks of a *dialogue des sourds* not least because the sense of satisfaction at the recent 'postcolonial turn' on the part of those who have long called for France to engage with its colonial past must be tempered by an awareness of the simultaneous resurgence of ideas that betray an often unacknowledged lineage from colonialist thought and practice. Nicolas Sarkozy's newly created *Ministère de l'Identité nationale* (or *Ministère de l'Immigration, de l'Intégration, de l'Identité nationale et du Développement* to give it its full, Byzantine title) is perhaps the most blatant example of a resurgent French nationalism in which racial and cultural difference are classified as harmful entities that must be neutralized by the process of assimilation; or, as Magyd Cherfi memorably describes it: 'Ce ministère de l'Identité serait

<sup>4</sup> For a fascinating collection of essays on the specifically North American tradition of French historical studies, see Laura Lee Downs and Stéphane Gerson (eds), *Why France? American Historians Reflect on an Enduring Fascination* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007). It is significant that a number of historians of French colonial history whose work has been influenced by postcolonial criticism contribute to this collection, notably Herman Lebovics, Todd Shepard, and, author of an article in this special issue, Tyler Stovall.

donc chargé de nous positiviser en êtres dociles et repentants, et en bout de course prêts à reconnaître Vercingétorix comme le père des petits frisés'.<sup>5</sup> Sarkozy's flirtation with this strongly nationalist agenda, in which a colonial discourse and vocabulary are rehabilitated was expressed even more clearly in a highly controversial speech that he delivered at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar in July of this year: alongside his by now characteristic refusal to 'repent' for alleged French 'crimes' of the past, he elaborated outdated conceptions of African identity (closeness to nature, cyclical understanding of time, importance of body over mind), which were dusted down and asserted as fact, while France's relationship to Africa was cast in terms of a 'Eurafrrique' that had last seen the light in the 1950s at the fag end of colonialism as the Republic attempted to salvage its colonial possessions.<sup>6</sup>

If, on the political front, the attack on the postcolonial is gathering pace, then equally, the exploration of a 'Postcolonial France' is far from a unanimous project shared by all scholars; indeed, in the work of the authors such as Pascal Bruckner and Daniel Lefeuve, we already appear to be witnessing a backlash against the postcolonial before it has even had a chance to establish itself as a credible, even useful term of critical analysis.<sup>7</sup> In this period of rapid evolution, it is impossible to determine with any certainty how the situation may develop. However,

<sup>5</sup> Magyd Cherfi, 'Identité nationale: ce ministère qui nous rebute', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 23-29 August 2007, pp.16-17 (p. 16). See also Tzvetan Todorov, 'Un ministère indésirable dans une démocratie libérale', *Le Monde*, 17 March 2007, in which this new ministry is described as 'Orwellian'.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of Sarkozy's Dakar speech, see the special dossier in *Jeune Afrique*, 5-11 August 2007, pp. 40-48.

<sup>7</sup> See Pascal Bruckner, *La Tyrannie de la pénitence: essai sur le masochisme occidental* (Paris: Grasset, 2005), and Daniel Lefeuve, *Pour en finir avec la repentance coloniale* (Paris: Flammarion, 2005). Both are discussed by Charles Forsdick in his article below.

irrespective of backlashes and debates about the relevance of the 'postcolonial' to France (which have always been something of a red herring), it is possible to see evidence in the rancorous but highly dynamic public and academic debates in France that the issues of colonialism and its aftermath are very much alive. For what has always underpinned the calls for a postcolonial analysis of France has not been the desire to establish a new academic field in (or in relation to) France called 'postcolonial studies', but rather the survival, development and flourishing of the type of work that postcolonial studies has long promoted.<sup>8</sup> Irrespective of whether or not this debate lives on under the banner of postcolonial studies, serious reflection on French colonialism and its legacies has now begun—and this reflection shows no immediate signs of abating.

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<sup>8</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of these ideas, see David Murphy, 'Beyond Anglophone Imperialism?', *New Formations*, 59 (Autumn 2006), pp. 132-43.

## Beyond Dead White Males: Towards a Postcolonial History of Europe

A key theme, and perhaps bone of contention, in the current wave of colonial and postcolonial studies has been the relationship between postcolonial theory and historical practice.<sup>1</sup> Scholars have frequently constructed this relationship as one of opposition, emphasizing the challenges each has posed to the other's core methodologies and assumptions. At times resembling a dialogue of the deaf, this opposition has also proved intellectually fruitful, especially in inspiring a new wave of anti-historicist historical studies of empire and its legacies for the modern world.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the tensions between those who see postcolonialism as a specific historical phenomenon versus those who regard it as a methodological and ideological imperative remain salient to this day.

As postcolonial scholars have been among the first to point out, all such oppositions are constructed and can conceal as much as they reveal. They are nevertheless 'real', if only because of the credence people invest in them, and they possess an important

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Stephen Howe, 'The Slow Death and Strange Rebirths of Imperial History', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 29 (2001), 131-41.

<sup>2</sup> On the new colonial historiography, see (among many texts) Frederick Cooper and Ann L. Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

heuristic value in improving our understanding of the postcolonial. So having acknowledged the incompleteness of this opposition, permit me to explore it briefly before moving on to address common challenges that face both sets of scholars. The postcolonial critique of history has come both from Western scholars and from non-Western intellectuals, in particular members of India's Subaltern Studies group.<sup>3</sup> One of the most prominent examples of the former is Robert J.C. Young's seminal study *White Mythologies*. The latter is perhaps best represented by Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe*.<sup>4</sup> The two texts, and many other postcolonial explorations of historical method, have much in common. Both emphasize a rejection not of history *tout court* but of historicism, teleologically oriented history that regards 'the European experience' as normative, and other alternative historical traditions and trajectories as deficient and ultimately inferior. Both challenge historicism as part of a rejection of both Marxist and nationalist narratives about colonialism, seen as undervaluing popular traditions and the rich diversity of anti-colonial resistance. Both devote considerable effort to an historical analysis of the main outlines of European social science, tracing the ways in which it has elaborated a Euro-centric model of the study of humanity. Finally, both to an important extent embrace alternative approaches, notably the historical archaeology of Michel Foucault, as ways of capturing more fully the wide range

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Robert J.C. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

of historical experience.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, this critique views History with a capital 'H' as intrinsic to the intellectual superstructure of Western imperial dominance.<sup>6</sup> As Robert Young argued, 'but how to write a new history? When, as Césaire observed, the only history is white?'.<sup>7</sup>

Not surprisingly, the postcolonial critique of history has been repeatedly challenged by historians over the past two decades. The most recent major example of this is Frederick Cooper's 2005 set of essays, *Colonialism in Question*.<sup>8</sup> Cooper, and others who share his basic perspectives, have challenged postcolonial theorists on a number of fronts. While acknowledging the importance of the critique of historicism, many have also argued that the theorists' position is seriously out of touch with the realities of modern historiography, in that most historians long ago abandoned the idea of a single historical meta-narrative. In particular, since the 1960s first social and then cultural historians have concentrated upon giving voice to the traditionally voiceless, and in doing so reshaping the general paradigms of the past. One example among many is Joan Kelly's seminal 1977 essay, 'Did Women have a Renaissance?', which not only gave new prominence to the history of women and gender in early modern Europe, but also forced a re-evaluation of our understanding of the idea of the Renaissance as a

<sup>5</sup> On Foucault and colonialism, see Ann L. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> As such, it ties into broader postmodern critiques of historicism and history writing in general. See Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

<sup>7</sup> Young, *White Mythologies*, p. 119.

<sup>8</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

whole.<sup>9</sup> Historians have also contended that the postcolonial critique of history ignores the ways in which subaltern groups themselves have embraced the practice of history as a means of empowerment and resistance, not just in the context of narrow nationalisms but in the spirit of underscoring their own humanity and agency. For some historians of colonialism in particular, the postcolonial critical perspective deploys history as a symbol that only partially reflects colonial historiographical *praxis*. Paradoxically, the theoretical call for a diversity of approaches to the past seems to rest upon a reified conceptualization of History as a single unified entity, one barely recognizable to professional historians.

This idea of history as symbol surfaces in particular in the debate around the relationship between Europe and empire. For many postcolonial theorists Europe is not a real place but a set of intellectual attitudes to be condemned. Dipesh Chakrabarty opens his *Provincializing Europe* with the following remarks:

Provincializing Europe is not a book about the region of the world we call 'Europe'. That Europe, one could say, has already been provincialized by history itself [...]. The Europe I seek to provincialize or decenter is an imaginary figure that remains deeply embedded in *clichéd and shorthand forms* in some everyday habits of thought that invariably subtend attempts in the social sciences to address questions of political modernity in South Asia.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Joan Kelly, 'Did Women have a Renaissance?', in Joan Kelly, *Women, History, and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 19-50.

<sup>10</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, pp. 3-4 (author's emphases).

In this fascinating passage Chakrabarty distinguishes between two ideas of Europe, a physical location and a complex of attitudes among modernist South Asian intellectuals. Especially intriguing is his assertion that Europe as a continent has become provincial because of the workings of history itself, implying both that Europe at the height of its global influence was not provincial, and that South Asian intellectuals need to catch up with the realities of Europe's current marginalization. Such an argument leaves Chakrabarty and other postcolonial theorists open to the charge that their idea of Europe represents a static abstraction, useful heuristically but with little relevance to the life experiences of most Europeans. As Frederick Cooper puts it: 'Too ready identification of an actual Europe with post-Enlightenment rationality not only leaves out the conflict and uncertainty within that continent's history, but also the extent to which even such constructs as bourgeois equality were not some essence of the West but products of struggle.'<sup>11</sup>

In this article, I wish to explore the intersections between Europe, history, and colonial and postcolonial studies, and to argue for a postcolonial history of Europe as a means of not only enriching our understanding of that troublesome continent but also addressing some of the conflicts between historians and postcolonial theorists outlined above. Over the past two decades colonial studies has paid a great deal of attention to Europe. For many theorists, this has involved not only critiques of Europe as symbol of a flawed Enlightenment universalism, but also attention to the many ways in which European thinkers constituted non-Europe as the Other. I still remember my initial reaction to reading Edward Said's *Orientalism* many years ago: the book struck me as all about the intellectual history of Europe, not 'the Orient', and yet paradoxically mostly specialists on the Middle East and the

colonized world discussed it.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, many specialists in the history of Africa and Asia, even those working in the colonial period, have often argued against an imperial focus or granting significant agency to Europe in the affairs of the people they study, emphasizing the problematic ideological nature of colonial administrative archives, the ability of Africans and Asians to determine the course of their own lives, and the fact that ultimately the colonial period was only one relatively small episode in their much longer histories.<sup>13</sup> Finally, historians of Europe itself have increasingly turned to colonial studies, driven by the observation of scholars like Ann L. Stoler that Europe was as much a product of empire as were its colonies. In British and French history in particular, a sizeable percentage of graduate students and younger scholars in the United States are now working on imperial topics.<sup>14</sup>

Yet for all this important scholarly productivity, often impressively interdisciplinary in scope, I would argue that colonial studies and historical analyses of Europe have remained to a large extent separate. Those historians, like Frederick Cooper, Ann L. Stoler, and Antoinette Burton, who have contributed the most to the dialogue with colonial and postcolonial scholars, have

<sup>12</sup> Chandreyee Niyogi (ed.), *Reorienting Orientalism* (London: Sage, 2006); Naseer Aruri and Muhammed A. Shurqydi (eds), *Revising Culture, Reinventing Peace: The Influence of Edward W. Said* (New York: Olive Branch, 2001); John D. Erikson and Ali Behdad (eds), 'Orientalism after *Orientalism*', special issue of *L'Esprit Créateur*, 34.2 (Summer 1994).

<sup>13</sup> J.F. Ade Ajayi, 'The Continuity of African Institutions under Colonialism', in Terence Ranger (ed.), *Emerging Themes of African History* (London: Heinemann, 1968), pp. 189-200; Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Chiang Mai: Silkwood Books, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Gary Wilder, 'Unthinking French history: colonial studies beyond national identity', in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and Through the Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 125-43.

<sup>11</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, p. 21.

generally been specialists in Africa and Asia, not Europe.<sup>15</sup> Much of the new colonial historiography of Europe has developed in some isolation from the broader currents of European historiography: for example, the French history conferences I attend have an increasing number of presentations dealing with colonialism, but panels that combine papers on colonial and metropolitan history remain relatively few. Moreover, such studies have often consisted of adding colonial issues to European history, rather than using them to challenge the very outlines of that historiography. This 'add brown people and stir' approach has meant, for example, that postcolonialism in Europe has often been presented as a discrete historical period, that of mass ex-colonial migration to European nations in the late twentieth century, rather than as a fundamental reinterpretation of European history in general.<sup>16</sup> It also begs the question, what is the colonial history of Europe when the colonized are not present in the metropole?

I offer the above remarks not at all to discount the very valuable work being produced by historians of European empires. Rather, I wish to explore the ways in which one can regard and study the European past as a colonial space. In considering the prospects for a postcolonial history of Europe, I focus on three themes, which I feel are not only crucial to such an approach but also represent challenges for postcolonial theory and European history alike.

<sup>15</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*; Cooper and Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire*.

<sup>16</sup> In consequence, many historians of non-whites in early modern Europe have explicitly challenged the idea that racial diversity only arrived in the aftermath of the Second World War. See Gretchen Gerzina, *Black London: Life before Emancipation* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), and Sue Peabody, *'There are no Slaves in France': The Political Economy of Race and Slavery under the Ancien Régime* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). This issue of the chronology of postcolonialism is of course not just an issue for historians: see Stuart Hall, 'When Was "the Postcolonial"? Thinking at the Limit', in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds), *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 242-60.

These are: 1) globalization and its relationship to the nation-state; 2) the problems of and prospects for integrating colonial histories into traditional narratives of the European past; and 3) intersections between postcolonialism and political activism. An exploration of the ways in which both theory and history have approached these three themes will, I hope, help us sketch out some of the basic outlines of a postcolonial history of Europe, as well as adding to our understanding of the role of the imperial past in creating the postcolonial present. Ultimately, the meaning of the term 'Europe', both for those interested in its history and those more concerned with its impact upon other societies, is at stake in the deployment of this new historical approach.

### Globalization and Postcolonial Europe

In addressing the issue of globalization, let me start by underscoring the constructed nature of the term 'Europe'. This is hardly an opposition between historians who focus on the 'real' Europe versus theorists who see the continent as an abstraction. For both, 'Europe' generally means not just a physical space but more importantly a set of historically determined beliefs. Any historian of Europe who has ever taught his/her specialty under the rubric 'Western Civilization' has certainly taken part in this process of reification. Is the United States part of Western civilization, for example, and if so is it part of Europe? Moreover, the idea of Europe as a cultural and historical unit is advanced more frequently by outsiders than by Europeans themselves. One is far more likely to find courses labeled 'European history' offered by universities in North America, for example, than in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy or Poland. It is hard therefore to fault Dipesh Chakrabarty for speaking of Europe as concept; quite

the contrary, I would challenge the distinction he makes between a conceptual and a real Europe.<sup>17</sup>

I begin this section on globalization with a discussion of the slippery nature of the concept of Europe to make the point that historically this idea is itself a product of global integration. This is important because many scholars, both theorists and historians alike, have viewed contemporary globalization as a major intellectual challenge, unsettling at best, problematic and noxious at worst.<sup>18</sup> For historians in particular, the prospect of reconstructing historical narratives across local and national boundaries has required new approaches to the discipline. Thanks to the importance of modern nation-states as the guardians of memory, via national archives, national libraries and national universities, many if not most historians tend to take the nation as the essential unit in the study of the past. There have of course always been historians, notably those interested in war and diplomacy, who have looked beyond national boundaries, and in the last few decades there has been a marked increase in transnational histories, such as those focusing on migration and diaspora, memory, and international cultural diffusion as well as colonial and imperial history.<sup>19</sup> Yet even in these fields the

<sup>17</sup> Anthony Pagden (ed.), *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Pim den Boer, *et al.*, *The History of the Idea of Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Silvia Federici (ed.), *Enduring Western Civilization: The Construction of the Concept of Western Civilization and its 'Others'* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995).

<sup>18</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: New Press, 1998); Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Steven Weber, *Globalization and the European Political Economy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Among many examples, some texts of interest include Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Gregory

national context often predominates. A review of the contents of the journal *History and Memory*, for example, reveals articles with titles like 'Monuments, Public Space, and the Memory of Empire in Modern Italy', or 'Collective Memory Divided and Reunited: Mothers, Daughters and the Fascist experience in Germany'.<sup>20</sup> To an important extent, the very notion of history itself in the modern era is inseparable from the rise of the nation-state.

At the same time, one can discern a tendency to embrace certain aspects of globalization. Many historians have responded to its challenge by emphasizing the fact that processes of international interchange and integration are nothing new. Frederick Cooper notes one historian's description of Mongol Eurasia in the fourteenth century as a kind of golden age of globalization.<sup>21</sup> This is done not so much with the idea of jumping on the globalist bandwagon, but rather as an attack upon the pretensions of certain of its advocates to have transcended history altogether, and in particular to herald the final triumph of market capitalism and the

Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999). See also Masao Miyoshi, 'A Borderless World? From colonialism to transnationalism and the decline of the nation-state', *Critical Inquiry*, 19.4 (Summer 1993), 726-51.

<sup>20</sup> Krystyna Von Henneberg, 'Monuments, Public Space and the memory of Empire', *History and Memory*, 16.1 (Spring/Summer 2004), 37-85; Joyce Marie Mushaben, 'Collective Memory Divided and Reunited: Mothers, Daughters and the Fascist Experience in Germany', *History and Memory*, 11.1 (Spring/Summer 1999), 7-40. The journal has also published several special issues on national memory: e.g., 'Traumatic Memory in Chinese History', 16.2 (2004), and 'Histories and Memories of Twentieth Century Germany', special double issue, 17.1-2 (2005).

<sup>21</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, pp.100-01; the reference is to B.A.F. Manz, 'Temur and the Problem of a Conqueror's Legacy', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1998).

definitive defeat of any alternatives to it on a worldwide scale. Rather, historians like Kenneth Pomeranz have chosen to make global interactions themselves a subject for historians. In this context, the history of empire offers a privileged site for the investigation of global encounters.<sup>22</sup>

If historians evince a certain ambivalence about globalization, postcolonial theorists have also approached the subject as both opportunity and challenge. Globalization's calling into question of the nation-state corresponds well with the deconstructive impetus of postcolonial theory; a movement which embraces the re-evaluation of colonial international relations, not to mention transnational processes like migration and diaspora, can find much of interest in current emphases on the world as a single unit. The very destructiveness of globalization, which Marx and Engels celebrated long ago in *The Communist Manifesto*, in many ways confirms the postcolonial emphasis on undermining traditional power relations. If globalization entails, for example, converting parts of European cities like Paris, London and Berlin into neighbourhoods dominated by natives of South Asia or North Africa, then it is crucial to the creation of a postcolonial world.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time, however, certain key aspects of globalization theories run very much counter to the work of postcolonial scholars. Current proponents of globalization theory, both academic and popular, tend to see it as the worldwide triumph of capitalism, pointing to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the

<sup>22</sup> Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, 'World History in a Global Age', *American Historical Review*, 100.4 (1995), 1034-60.

<sup>23</sup> Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (eds), *The Cultures of Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Ali Behdad, 'On Globalization, Again!', in Ania Loomba et al., *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp.62-79; Simon Gikandi, 'Globalization and the claims of Postcoloniality', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 100.3 (2001), 627-58.

turn of Communist nations like China and Vietnam to market economic strategies as proof. According to this perspective, not only political shifts but technological changes like the rise of the Internet and in general the increased fluidity of global communications have rendered any resistance to market capitalism futile. Such neo-liberal free market ideology inevitably translates into advocacy of an international economy based on inequality and exploitation.<sup>24</sup> When postcolonial theorists speak of transcending empire, a return to free market imperialism is hardly what they have in mind. Similarly, globalization as currently preached bears an uncomfortable resemblance to modernization theory, the idea that there is one normative path towards modernity and prosperity, the one pioneered by the capitalist West.<sup>25</sup> Even if one substitutes Indian software engineers and Chinese bankers for Lancashire cotton magnates, one can still detect the emphasis on Progress that postcolonial theorists have so frequently attacked. In its claims to have transcended history, ironically enough globalization has often replicated what for postcolonial scholars are the worst sins of historicism.

Given the problems and prospects of globalization for both historical scholarship and postcolonial theory, how can a putative postcolonial history of Europe address this challenge? Let me suggest two specific avenues of inquiry that should demonstrate the potential of such an historical practice. The first has to do with what historian Gary Wilder has recently termed the 'imperial nation-state'.<sup>26</sup> In his recent book on this subject, Wilder

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> On modernization theory, see Dean C. Tipps, 'Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 15.2 (1973), 199-226; Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*.

underscores the strange and paradoxical character of the French polity during the period of high imperial expansion in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As he notes, after 1870 France was both a republic and an empire at the same time, combining two forms of government that were not only theoretically contradictory but had been deeply opposed to each other since the French Revolution. An empire without emperor or empress, France was at the same time a nation of citizens and an empire of subjects.

The contradictory nature of republican imperialism also highlighted the contrast between the empire and the modern nation-state. Much of the political history of modern Europe has emphasized the decline of multinational empires in favour of more culturally homogeneous nation-states. The First World War, which brought the collapse of every major empire in Europe, is often taken as the key turning point.<sup>27</sup> Yet the rise of European nation-states in fact went hand in hand with the rise of overseas empires. The fact that the year 1492 brought both the unification of the Spanish nation and the first steps in the creation of its empire in the Americas shows that this is not exclusively an aspect of recent history. Even if one argues that overseas empires are fundamentally different from European ones, a position I think most historians of colonialism would reject, what is one to make of the case of modern Germany, in which national unification took the form of empire?<sup>28</sup>

What this suggests is that, at least in the history of Europe, empire and the nation-state are not opposed but rather

<sup>27</sup> Edmund Taylor, *The Fall of the Dynasties: The Collapse of the Old Order, 1905-1922* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1963); Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia, and the Middle East* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> John Breuilly, *The Formation of the First German Nation-State* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996); Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

interdependent. This calls into question, or at least complicates, the traditional idea that modern national unity is a function of increased political and cultural homogeneity. Instead, it may very well be that European national integration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was at least in part due to the presence of the Other within the boundaries of the nation itself. The colonies, both interior and exterior to the imperial metropolises, presented difference in a comprehensible fashion, reaffirming certain themes of national identity from which they were excluded. In his classic work *Peasants into Frenchmen* historian Eugen Weber contrasted the successful assimilation of the French countryside into a national culture at the end of the nineteenth century with the failures of colonial assimilation. He neglected to point out, however, that the two were interdependent: elementary school textbooks not only preached the unity of the nation but also the glories of colonial conquest and the strangeness of France's overseas possessions.<sup>29</sup>

This interaction of nation-state and empire also speaks to a key theme of modern European history, the rise of liberalism. Like the nation-state, liberal philosophy had a paradoxical relationship with imperial expansion. A kind of liberal evangelism spurred much of the race for empire, at least ideologically, in the late nineteenth century; the role of anti-slavery sentiment in the exploration and conquest of the African interior is well known. At the same time, empire underscored the conflict between liberalism and democratic politics, at a time when in Europe itself the two were beginning to merge into liberal democracy. Scholars have generally viewed this as a contradiction, yet in a way the liberal character of the modernist colonial encounter represented the preservation of

<sup>29</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976); Etya Sorel, *Histoire de la colonisation: le thème colonial dans les manuels de l'enseignement secondaire français: l'exemple de l'Afrique* (Paris: Centre d'études et de recherches marxistes, 1967).

classic liberalism, with its emphasis on empowerment only through personal uplift, whereas the emergent liberal and social democracy of the metropolises seems more contradictory. The fact that the ultimate fruit of social democracy, the welfare state, came under fire in late twentieth century western Europe in the context of the growth of major postcolonial populations there should reinforce the importance of the interaction between colonialism and liberalism, not just for the colonies but for Europe as well.<sup>30</sup>

A second avenue of inquiry has to do with the relationship between Europe and Islam. A major concern of globalization has been what Samuel P. Huntington has called the 'clash of civilizations' between Western modernity and Islamic fundamentalism.<sup>31</sup> Many advocates of globalisation portray integralist Islam as the most important source of resistance to their brave new world, in a new version of the Cold War Manichean opposition between capitalism and Communism.<sup>32</sup> Within this new global conflict Europe has often taken centre stage, whether it be

<sup>30</sup> Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Bernard Semmel, *The Liberal Ideal and the Demons of Empire: Theories of Imperialism from Adam Smith to Lenin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Jeanne Morefield, *Covenants without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997); Michael Novak, *The Universal Hunger for Liberty: Why the Clash of Civilizations is Not Inevitable* (New York: Basic Books, 2004). For some critiques of Huntington see Salim Rashid (ed.), *The Clash of Civilizations? Asian Responses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Marc Crépon, *L'Imposture du choc des civilisations* (Nantes: Pleins Feux, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996); Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: the Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Ali A. Mazrui, *Islam: Between Globalization and Counter-Terrorism* (Oxford: James Currey, 2006).

because of the resistance of 'Old Europe' to the American invasion of Iraq, or the recruitment activities of Al Qaeda and other militant Islamic groups among the continent's large and growing Muslim population.<sup>33</sup> Even domestic political dissidence among youth of immigrant and Muslim origin in Europe is often integrated into this global struggle: conservative journalists characterized the 2005 suburban uprisings in France with phrases like 'Second front in the war on terror' and 'Fallujah-sur-Seine'.

Such perspectives tie into a much older narrative of the fundamental opposition between Europe and Islam, one that goes back to the early modern era, if not all the way to the Crusades. Yet this narrative has always hidden the fact that, almost from its beginnings, Islam has been very much a part of European history. From the 700-year history of Muslim Iberia to the strong Islamic presence in the Balkans to this day, those who follow Islam have played a central role in the life of the European continent.<sup>34</sup> Some advocates of globalization have noted with surprise that many Muslim recruits to Islamic terror in Europe have in fact been born there, and their number includes not only those of immigrant parents but also converts to Islam.<sup>35</sup> Rather than seeming unusual,

<sup>33</sup> Bruce Bawer, *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within* (New York: Doubleday, 2006); Gilles Kepel, *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe*, trans. by Susan Milner (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997); Tony Glankley, *The West's Last Chance: Will We Win the Clash of Civilizations?* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publications, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001); Gabriele Crespi, *The Arabs in Europe* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986); James M. Powell (ed.), *Muslims under Latin Rule, 1100-1300* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Pierre Guichard, *Al-Andalus, 711-1492* (Paris: Hachette, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Jytte Klausen, *The Islamic Challenge: Politics and Religion in Western Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Robert Pauly, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization?* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004); Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

such an observation should merely underscore the fact that Europe is a very diverse place, and that what has classically been regarded as 'European civilization' has in fact always been opposed by many Europeans.

In this context, the challenge of globalization calls for a radical revision of European history, one that integrates Islam into that past. It should no longer be possible for students to graduate a course in 'Western civilization' without at least a passing familiarity with Islam in general and the Ottoman Empire in particular. Many of us have been content to consign the history of the Ottomans and of modern Turkey to the fuzzily defined region known as the Middle East. Yet, just as the contemporary Turkish demand for admission to the European Union has called into question traditional views of the continent, so must the recognition that the Ottoman Empire was European as well as Asian and African nuance our understanding of the historical creation of Europe.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, as Muslims in contemporary Europe come to exercise greater weight in the lives of their nations, they will hopefully demand a revised European history that recognizes their own presence and contributions. Or to put it another way, rather than preaching a 'Europeanized Islam' that holds to classically Western values, European nations with large Muslim populations will have to recognize that they are faced with an Islam that has been European all along.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Ivan Parvev, *Habsburgs and Ottomans between Vienna and Belgrade (1683-1739)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

<sup>37</sup> Alain Gresh, et al., *Islam de France, islams d'Europe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005); Tariq Modood, et al., *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: A European Approach* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Ian Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam: The Death of Theo van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

Historicizing the relationship between the nation-state and empire, and the place of Islam in Europe, challenges historians to rethink some commonly held ideas about the European past. At the same time, it suggests that postcolonial ideas about Europe, both as symbol and as actual place, must take into account the tremendous diversity of experiences offered by that continent's history, so that even certain standard ideas about modernity are open to question. It will be interesting to see, for example, historians of European Islam consider the ways in which European history in general has been shaped by and in response to Muslims. Hopefully, such an approach will help replace current neo-liberal theories of globalization with far more profound insights into the ways in which Europe has interacted with a diversity of peoples and histories throughout the world.

### Colonialism and the Invention of Europe

Like globalization, the role of colonialism in the creation of Europe has prompted much reflection from both postcolonial theorists and historians of empire. Both tend to emphasize the interconnectedness of the two while at the same time seeing them as fundamentally distinct entities. For many postcolonial theorists, Europe remains above all the symbol of modernity, of capitalism and the Enlightenment. It also constitutes a powerful symbol of racial domination, defining Europe as white. College students who refer to European history courses as the 'study of dead white males' of course share this theoretical orientation. In this postcolonial reading, 'Europe' is a global presence that shapes the fates of colonies and ex-colonies alike, while at the same time remaining tied to a specific geographical locale. In contrast, historians of empire have in part shifted from a focus on Europe as something to be resisted to a new approach that emphasizes how both metropolises and their colonies have been constituted by the

imperial nexus. In her landmark work, *A Mission to Civilize*, for example, Alice Conklin demonstrates how the French republican ideal derived from experiences in both France and West Africa. Historians of race and of gender have demonstrated the important role played by the colonies in elaborating metropolitan agendas.

The task of a postcolonial historiography of Europe is to maintain and further such insights, while at the same time addressing the interplay between Europe and 'Europe', between geographical and ideological perceptions of the continent. While it is instructive and important to consider interrelations between metropole and colonies, we must also remain aware of the tendency of such an approach to constitute the two as separate spheres, rather than mutually constitutive and hierarchically differentiated zones of the same political and cultural unit. This is not to undervalue the very real differences between peoples in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, but rather to emphasize that all such differences should be a matter for historical inquiry rather than taken as given. For historians of Europe, this means not only taking into account colonial influences on regional and national life, but also attention to the ways in which issues seemingly far-removed from questions of colonialism mirror imperial tropes. One must consider not only Europe as colonizer, but also Europe as colonized.

One topic to which such an approach can be fruitfully applied is the history of the world wars in twentieth-century Europe. I choose this topic not only because of its overwhelming and enduring popularity (not for nothing is the cable TV History Channel frequently referred to as the 'Hitler channel') but also because of the many ways in which it exemplifies both globalization and imperial change. It could be considered that the First and Second World Wars were all about imperialism, from destruction of formal empire within Europe by the first to the collapse of overseas empire in the aftermath of the second. Both wars revolved around a struggle for colonies among the principal

European powers, and involved the deployment of hundreds of thousands of colonial subjects in military theatres far from home. In addition, both wars, by forging the modern concept of the 'superpower', created a new identity for European nations as colonized territories, economically, politically and militarily.<sup>38</sup> This was the central theme of what one may call the 'Third World War', the Cold War, which divided the formerly mighty continent between American and Soviet power blocs. Finally, the Holocaust in Europe resembled nothing so much as colonial racial exterminism.<sup>39</sup> A number of leading intellectuals, including Hannah Arendt, Aimé Césaire, and Frantz Fanon have characterized Nazi Germany in general, both its expansionism and the Holocaust, as nothing less than the manifestation of the worst evils of colonialism on European soil.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999) for one discussion of the relationship between decolonization and American hegemony in Europe after the Second World War.

<sup>39</sup> Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); David Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2003). A substantive, and often heated, debate has arisen over the scholarly and moral legitimacy of comparing the Holocaust to other instances of mass murder. See on this point Alan S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *Is the Holocaust unique?: Perspectives on Comparative Genocide* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); Steven T. Katz, *The Holocaust and Comparative History* (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1993); Eric D. Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

<sup>40</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. by Joan Pinkham (1955; New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (1961; New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1963); Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968).

None of these themes is particularly new, yet I would argue that up to now they have had little impact on the historiography of the world wars in Europe. Relatively few have followed the theorists listed above in considering the colonial nature of these conflicts. Even scholars who have investigated the wartime struggles in the colonies themselves have generally not systematically investigated Césaire's and Fanon's claims that colonialism and fascism were essentially the same, one being simply an overseas variant of another.<sup>41</sup> To offer another example, there are strong parallels between European resistance movements against fascism and postwar anti-colonial struggles: both combined nationalism and social radicalism, and the latter often combined anti-fascism and anti-imperialism, as in the case of the Viet Minh. However, to my knowledge at least, few if any historians have explored this parallel, or tried to analyse European resistance as an example of anti-colonial struggle. This is the kind of challenge that a postcolonial history of Europe must assume, exploring the ways in which global war not only weakened the boundaries between metropole and colony, but ultimately redefined both.<sup>42</sup>

Let me offer an example from my own research. For some years now I have been working on a study of working class consumer protests in Paris at the end of the First World War. The major

<sup>41</sup> Eric Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Petain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy Years in French West Africa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> Bob Moore (ed.), *Resistance in Western Europe* (New York: Berg, 2000); Rab Bennett, *Under the Shadow of the Swastika: The Moral Dilemmas of Resistance and Collaboration in Hitler's Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Michel Henri, *The Shadow War: Resistance in Europe, 1939-1945*, trans. by Richard Barry (London: Deutsch, 1972). One book that does draw this parallel is Basil Davidson, *Special Operations Europe: Scenes from the anti-Nazi War* (London: V. Gollancz, 1980). Davidson, a noted historian of Africa, wrote this combination of history and memoir based on his own service as a British agent in German-occupied Italy and Yugoslavia.

theme of this project is to challenge much of the historical literature on consumer culture that tends to regard consumerism as a trans-class phenomenon that undermines political resistance to capitalism, instead integrating the masses into apolitical consumerist utopias.<sup>43</sup> A key aspect of it consists in exploring what it meant to be working class in this time and place. Several years ago, during the course of my research I discovered that one important component of wartime working class life was the importation during the war of several hundred thousand labourers from France's colonies, workers who were summarily dismissed and sent back home in 1919. As I have explored in several articles, clearly there was a major imperial dimension to metropolitan working class life in wartime Paris, one that had to be considered in any analysis of that history.<sup>44</sup>

Yet I would argue that to render this history a truly postcolonial one involves more than just noting the presence of colonial subjects on French soil. In 1919 Paris was the site of the peace conference charged with ending the First World War, and thus as central to global politics as it has ever been before or since in its

<sup>43</sup> See for example Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Michael Seidman, *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004). For other challenges to this view, see Ellen Furlough and Carl Strikwerda (eds), *Consumers against Capitalism? Consumer Cooperation in Europe, North America, and Japan, 1840-1990* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999); Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991); Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Martin Pugh, 'Women, Food, and Politics, 1880-1930', *History Today*, 41 (March 1991), 14-20.

<sup>44</sup> See my 'Remaking the French Working Class: the Postwar Exclusion of Colonial Labor', *Representations* (Summer 2003), 52-72; and 'The Color Line Behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War', *The American Historical Review*, 103.3 (June 1998), 737-69.

long history. A key aspect of this peace-making process was the reaffirmation of European imperialism and the exclusion or silencing of colonial voices demanding autonomy and independence.<sup>45</sup> Thus both local and global processes of imperial domination converged in the French capital: the exclusion of colonial workers from the Paris labour market in 1919 paralleled the exclusion of colonial voices from the Paris peace conference. There is also an interesting counterpoint between Parisian workers' tendency to embrace unconventional protest tactics in 1919, such as rent strikes and food riots, and state efforts to recreate the traditional labour force that the wartime mobilization of empire had so disrupted. Finally, the contrast between the Paris of the peace conference and the Paris of working people also constitutes a dialogue between the two aspects of Europe, geographical and ideological, that I would argue is a major contribution of postcolonial theory. To explore such themes is to move beyond the 'add brown people and stir' approach, investigating instead the ways in which European and colonial histories moved to similar rhythms.

This one example from my own research should hopefully illustrate some of the challenges and prospects for moving towards what I regard as a postcolonial history of Europe. What is ultimately at stake is the creation of a new vision of Europe and European history, one that critically interrogates its immersion in concepts of 'Western civilization' and at the same time transcends that conceptual matrix. In order to achieve this, we must be willing and able to consider all aspects of that history, including those in which colonies and colonial subjects do not play a prominent role,

<sup>45</sup> On the Paris peace conference, see Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002); William Keylor (ed.), *The Legacy of the Great War: Peacemaking, 1919* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

from the perspectives of global patterns of domination, difference, and cultural interchange.

### The Politics of Postcolonial History

I wish to conclude this article with a brief consideration of the politics of a prospective postcolonial history. Questions of struggle and power inform everything that we do as scholars, and yet political analyses, and in particular political mobilization and activism, have frequently proven a thorny knot to untangle. Postcolonial theory has in general inherited from post-structuralism both an emphasis on the primacy of the political, and at the same time a certain hesitation to endorse specific politics or political actors.<sup>46</sup> The disenchantment with the prospects for progressive political change in the aftermath of May 1968 that so marks the work of Michel Foucault has in the postcolonial context often taken the form of a reaction against anti-colonial nationalist movements as forces for liberation, as well as a rejection of the Manichean dichotomy of colonizer and colonized upon which so much anti-imperial struggle has rested.<sup>47</sup> For many historians, political understanding is something that one can extract from our

<sup>46</sup> Jonathan Arac, *Postmodernism and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Andrew Ross (ed.), *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Brent Picett, *On the Use and Abuse of Foucault for Politics* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005); Jon Simons, *Foucault and the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Sylvain Meyet, et al., *Travailler avec Foucault: retours sur le politique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005).

<sup>47</sup> The work of Frantz Fanon in particular has often been targeted by those attacking binary ideas of colonialism and anti-colonial struggle. Anthony C. Alessandrini, *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999); James D. Le Sueur, *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics during the Decolonization of Algeria* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

works, but all too many of us fail to underscore the fact that the ultimate duty of informing our students and peers is to empower them to take action. One should analyse the past as a way of making sense of the present, not as a way of escaping from it.

There are many good reasons for rejecting the political choices of the past and demanding new ways of understanding questions of power in the contemporary world. However, I would argue that in today's world we do not have the luxury of failing to address the great public questions of war, peace, and global domination. Not for generations in the United States have we witnessed such a muscular deployment of neo-imperialist praxis as has developed since the attacks of 11 September 2001. To teach the history of empire in contemporary America is to inhabit a strange kind of parallel universe where the themes one discusses in class are faithfully (and usually uncritically) mirrored in the contemporary press. Ideas such as the export of democracy and modernity, the barbarism of native cultures, the opposition between civilization and 'terror', and the need to rescue native (especially Muslim) women from oppression are all tossed around without any sense of their implication in an earlier imperialist past. Whether or not we wish it to be, empire is very much a matter of public debate and policy today; it is up to us to decide what our role in those debates shall be.<sup>48</sup>

It seems to me, perhaps in a spirit of eternal optimism, that the kind of postcolonial history I am proposing can have a salutary influence in these circumstances. Of course, to the extent that current calls for empire are profoundly, even militantly ahistorical, any insistence on the importance of the historical past is a positive development. More specifically, however, there are certain themes

<sup>48</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire: the Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2003); David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (New York: Norton, 1998); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 2002).

of the history of postcolonial Europe that are directly relevant to this political imperative. One is the idea that empire is a costly affair for the colonizing powers, not only economically but also politically and morally. As Herman Lebovics argues in his recent book *Imperialism and the Corruption of Democracies*, the price of imperial adventure abroad is frequently the loss of democracy at home.<sup>49</sup> If that is the case, such an argument should lead one to wonder why European democracies have been so prone to colonialism in the first place? This leads to another point for which European history should provide an exemplary series of case studies, namely the relationship between colonialism overseas and domestic questions of difference, especially racial but also those based on class, gender, and religion. The history of the Holocaust, for example, shows how issues of religion and ethnicity became confounded with those of race and colonialism; a central facet of modern European Jewish history is one of migration from the colonized borderlands of Eastern Europe to the European heartland, and the genocidal response to that process of assimilation.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, in evoking the Holocaust I wish to conclude by indicating another key theme that any postcolonial history of Europe must embrace, and that must shape its contribution to contemporary political debates about empire. This is a fundamental sense of moral outrage and revulsion. While it is crucial to explore the many subtle ways in which colonial relations

<sup>49</sup> Herman Lebovics, *Imperialism and the Corruption of Democracies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>50</sup> Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein (eds), *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Frances Malino and David Sorkin (eds), *Profiles in Diversity: Jews in a Changing Europe, 1750-1870* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998); Janet Kerekes, *Masked Ball at the White Cross Café: The Failure of Jewish Assimilation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005).

of power operated, and to underscore the abilities of the colonized to shape their own destinies, at the same time we must insist upon the nefarious and frequently murderous character of imperialisms past and present. A region like Europe, one that has been both colonizer and colonized, one that has both caused and endured such tremendous human suffering over the last century, constitutes an ideal setting for an historiography whose core values emphasize human dignity and autonomy over relations of power, domination and exploitation. This is all the more important given the extremely sanguinary character of today's neo-imperialism; we live in a time in which Madeleine Albright, former President Clinton's Secretary of State could say with a straight face that achieving America's foreign policy goals in the Middle East justified causing the deaths of a million Iraqis, half of them children. In such a world we have not only the right but the duty to bend our scholarly knowledge toward the struggle against the resurgence of empire. To end with a bad pun, the ultimate duty of a postcolonial historiography should be to make colonialism history.

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### **Making Frenchness Plural: How France Contends with its 'Others'**

While it is more or less a given that there are a variety of forms, histories, and discourses of postcoloniality, one might also reasonably claim that postcolonial theory can in principle be applied to a number of different political and cultural contexts, analyzing a variety of cultural forms and practices that both mediated and emerged from relations of domination and subordination as they came to exist during the period of modern European colonialism or imperialism, or as they continue to exist, in our neocolonial era, between ethnic groups, cultures, or nations. Such theories actively engage with a variety of discursive forms and patterns of representation, energized and enabled by a set of racially grounded perspectives and practices that fuelled both commercial and state policies on a more or less global scale. Subsequently, discourses of identity and nationalism came to dominate the Anglophone postcolonial debate, even as such corollaries as diaspora and hybridity took on increasing importance and as emerging patterns of migration and cultural production re-located the analysis and representation of the imperial/colonial relation towards the new literature—with their attendant discourses of difference and identity—being spawned in both metropole and periphery.

Those formulations of identity that abandon concepts of linguistic and ethnic exclusiveness in favour of a postmodern vision drawn on an inscription in multiple subject positions and locations appear almost as avatars of Caribbean patterns of inscription, integration and exchange as they took shape in such postwar European metropolitan centres as London and Paris. Indeed, characteristic definitions of Caribbean diasporic identity as one rooted in mixture and transformation both at home and abroad

are directly linked both to the colonial experience and to the patterns of postcolonial migration that ensued; here, as the diaspora shifted to the metropolitan centre, self-definition moved to the discursive fore in tandem with the increasing size, visibility and presence of Caribbean migrant groups and their cultural corollaries of creole, calypso, reggae, fiction, food, drama and dress. On the British side, this postwar presence of Caribbean colonial subjects rapidly became increasingly visible and tangible; figures cited by the Home Office show that, beginning with the docking of the *MS Empire Windrush* with its 450 West Indian passengers at Tilbury in 1948, the 15,301 British residents claiming to be born in the Caribbean in 1951 had mushroomed to 171,800 ten years later and to 304,000 in 1971; by 1981, reflecting a subsequent migration wave made up primarily of children and dependents of previous migrants, 275,000 of Britain's West Indians claimed a birthplace outside the UK, while 244,000 of them claimed British birth. By the end of the 1980s, it was confirmed that the total West Indian population in the UK had surpassed 500,000, and stood at about 0.9% of the population. By comparison with a resident regional Anglophone Caribbean population of about five million, not only was the relative size of this group paradoxically striking, but its impact on British society and culture would be radical, permanent and transformative.

For the French, this trajectory of migrant presence would adopt a slightly different shape; following the advent of overseas departmentalization or political integration into the former colonial mainland of France's four *vieilles colonies* in 1946—the only instance of such a far-reaching *renversement* in colonial history—and despite succeeding developmental *étapes* that made the three Caribbean *départements d'outre-mer* a *région mono-départementale* in 1982 and a DOM-ROM, or *région d'outre-mer*, in 2003, these territories are marked by a tangible series of ongoing economic disadvantages in comparison with France. For

example, unemployment hovers at around 30%, compared to a rate of about 8% for the metropole. Departmentalization has also led to a modernized *société de consommation*, as over 90% of all goods consumed in the DOMs are now imported from France, and their elevated prices reflect the cost of transportation across the Atlantic. Meanwhile, migration to the metropole—and its attendant social, cultural and linguistic effects—has probably been the most visible consequence of 1946; in point of fact, *domien* population movement into France was actively catalyzed by the creation of the state agency BUMIDOM (Bureau pour le développement des migrations dans les départements d'outre-mer). Between its inauguration in April 1963 and its dissolution eighteen years later, BUMIDOM funnelled over 160,000 workers from Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, and Réunion on to the French mainland, many of whom sought to escape rising unemployment in their own territories even as the Bureau attempted to assuage France's postwar labour shortage.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, after sixty years of departmentalization and more than forty years of organized migration, the rapidly changing demographics of contemporary France show that there are almost 800,000 persons of French Caribbean birth or descent living on the French mainland today; this is over 1% of the total French population, and twice as many as make up the entire population of Guadeloupe and Martinique combined, with more than 80% of this population residing in Paris—now known in certain quarters as the 'third island'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Alain Anselin, 'West Indians in France', in Richard D.E. Burton and Fred Reno (eds), *French and West Indian: Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana Today* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1995), pp.112-18.

<sup>2</sup> See Marc Tardieu, *Les Antillais à Paris d'hier à aujourd'hui* (Paris: Editions du Rocher, 2005), pp. 175-76.

Given the steady growth in West Indian arrivals, this new 'fact of blackness' would catalyze this critical Anglo-Caribbean conjunction, vivifying the doubleness of this subject and giving rise to alternative, metropolitan articulations of postcolonial discourse as its primary field of representation. By contrast, however, in the French experience, following on the works of early Francophone thinkers such as Aimé Césaire and especially Frantz Fanon, who shaped transnational perspectives on postcolonial theory to a significant degree, much contemporary French postcolonial discourse (stemming largely from the Francophone world outside France) has been concerned with the anomalous, even paradoxical condition of many former French postcolonial nations, and especially of France's colonies-turned-departments and of migrants from these peripheral territories to the French metropolitan centre. As a result, the varied approaches of such critics as Edouard Glissant, Achille Mbembe and Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, all largely seeking to challenge the accepted traditions, practices and positionalities of the metropolitan production of discourses of integration and nationalism, or even the relation of these discourses to French poststructuralist theory, or to pressing suburban social and political problems, tends to go largely unrecognized and unanalyzed on the mainland.

The intersection of metropole and DOM has eventuated a set of postcolonial discourses that draw explicitly on these issues of integration and citizenship. Edouard Glissant's articulation of *antillanité* in *Le Discours antillais* came after thirty-five years of the departmentalization experience, a period which witnessed the increasing—and, perhaps, the increasingly inevitable—socio-economic integration of the DOMs into the larger framework of the metropole, along with the gradual disappearance of the local plantation economy as well as locally owned French Caribbean businesses, and a steady increase in migration to the metropole as

a result of shrinking job prospects, higher unemployment, and the freedom of movement now afforded by DOM status. From this perspective, Glissant's discursive critique underlines the extent to which neocolonial realities continue to threaten the development of this discursive and cultural state of postcolonial awareness. It is in mediating the inscription of a pluralised perspective that helps to shape the articulation of a truly identitarian Franco-Caribbean vision, one that can contest the all-encompassing framework of metropolitan *intégrisme* even as it co-exists with it, that *antillanité* will find its true value:

Nous savons ce qui menace l'antillanité [...], les cordons ombilicaux qui maintiennent ferme ou souple beaucoup de ces îles dans la réserve d'une métropole donnée [...]. L'isolement diffère pour chaque île la prise de conscience de l'antillanité, en même temps qu'il éloigne chaque communauté de sa vérité propre.<sup>3</sup>

Even as Glissant pinpoints the myriad forms and formulas of continuing metropolitan domination, he highlights the neocolonial tensions of identitarian and ethnocultural difference that prevent this Franco-Caribbean population from recognizing and coming to terms with the non-metropolitan pluralism of their regional identity. Glissant envisages a discourse of difference that inscribes new possibilities for identity through a differential *francité* whose embodiment of the regional experience renders it both separate from and coeval with ongoing metropolitan articulations of Frenchness.

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<sup>3</sup> Edouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* (Paris: Seuil, 1981), pp. 422-23.

*Créolité*, on the other hand, while often seen in negative contradistinction to *antillanité* on the one side and by departmentalization's postcolonialism-which-is-not-one-or-the-other, clearly emerges from the tensions and teleologies engendered by the French Caribbean presence in the metropole, a detail of its genesis which is often overlooked. Indeed, in a key contextual fragment, the text's concluding note explains its beginnings as a 'conférence prononcée le dimanche 22 mai 1988 au Festival caraïbe de la Seine Saint-Denis', thus insisting both on its originary orality and its metropolitan provenance; Seine-Saint-Denis is one of a number of Parisian *banlieues* principally characterised by an immigrant population in general, and, in this instance, a Caribbean cast in particular.<sup>4</sup> *Créolité*, in its turn, insists upon the transformative possibilities and pluralities emerging from ongoing historico-cultural encounters and exchanges in the (French) Caribbean context, thereby engendering and valorizing a double pluralism—so to speak—that draws on the varied filaments and striations of Caribbeanness to inscribe French Caribbean *francité* as an entity integral to a larger Frenchness even as it continues to be distinguishable from it. At the same time, *créolité* establishes its difference from *antillanité*'s geopolitical concerns by concentrating on developing patterns of creative expression that reflect and instantiate the multiplicity of the creole mosaic. Through this insistence on the pervasive pluralities of Frenchness, the many-sidedness of the creole language, *créolité*'s fundamental enabling metaphor given its structural amalgamation and transformation of various strands of both African and European lexical and grammatical patterns, is also highlighted. Given this compound character, the authors of the *Eloge* claim that

<sup>4</sup> Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité/In Praise of Creoleness*, bilingual edition, trans. by M.B. Taleb-Khyar (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), p. 54.

*créolité*, 'c'est exprimer non une synthèse, pas simplement un métissage, ou n'importe quelle autre unicité. C'est exprimer une totalité kaléidoscopique, c'est-à-dire la conscience non-totalitaire d'une diversité préservée.'<sup>5</sup> Perhaps as a result of a wave of critiques levelled at what was seen as an implicit rigidity and essentialism in their approach, its authors have since sought to refine it; in an extended interview with Lucien Taylor marking the tenth anniversary of the publication of the *Eloge*, a certain evolution in perspective and positionality on the part of its creators becomes clear. Patrick Chamoiseau, for example, asserts that even as creolization evolves, it also extends well beyond the region:

So yes, the Antilles represent an archetype of creolization. But in general, creolization occurs when a number of peoples and worldviews are precipitated together and forced to get along. And in this sense, all the Americas are places of creolization – as, increasingly, are all the big Western megapoles. In any case, our position is that there are several *Créolités* [...]. There isn't some Creole essence. There's a state of being-Creole [...]. But this remains permanently in motion, pushing us headlong in a movement of diversity, of change and exchange.<sup>6</sup>

It is through this ongoing process of preserving and extending diversity and exchange that the difference(s) of French Caribbean *francité* are inscribed.

<sup>5</sup> *Eloge*, p.28; emphasis in the original.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, 'Créolité Bites, an interview with Lucien Taylor', *Transition* 74 (1998), 124-61 (p.142).

What is at issue here is a critically intersecting network of signification, one in which several strands of nationalism, history, culture, ethnicity, and, especially, discourse, encounter and transform each other, giving rise to varied inscriptions of identitarian Frenchness that function within a doubled framework of discourse and representation. Such a conjoining is crucial to articulations of identity and subjectivity, as Stuart Hall strongly suggests:

Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation [...], because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity—an 'identity' in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation).<sup>7</sup>

I have cited Hall at length here because a number of issues that he raises are clearly critical to the pluralization of Frenchness that is at the core of the discussion in this special issue. If, on the one hand, diachronic articulations of discourse taking place within the hexagon gave rise to the unitary, integrationist visions of

Frenchness that came to dominate the metropolitan public sphere, then such articulations implicitly and simultaneously defined French identity, for all practical purposes, despite the demonstrable presence and influence of a variety of immigrant groups on French soil, particularly from the onset of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The movement of populations from the southern reaches of Europe, from countries like Italy, Greece, and Spain, as well as from several Eastern European countries, grew in response to French economic growth and its ancillary benefits in health and living conditions for the labouring classes. After the Second World War, in 1946, the Office National de Migration, or ONI, was founded to set governmental policy with regard to a large-scale recruitment and integration of foreign bodies—divided principally into foreign nationals, citizens of former colonies, and migrants from overseas departments with full citizenship rights—aimed at redressing both the labour and the population shortages resulting from the ravages of the Second World War. The enunciative and exclusionary strategies elicited by the presence of these new population groups can be read as a symbolic and material instantiation of *la plus grande France*: basically, the integrationist model could be upheld by falling back on the 'whitening' of these European arrivants, whose capacity to 'pass' effectively veiled their presence as against the more visible one of those from, for example, the African and Caribbean colonies. In other words, 'identity', as a defining category, shifted from framing an all-inclusive sameness in the first half of the twentieth century to a fracturing and fissuring into 'identities' with the advent of a postwar and postcolonial France.

Central to the complexities, contradictions and paradoxes undergirding the elaboration and articulation of a differential French Caribbean identity in the metropole is the fact that as French citizens, Antilleans do not face the same legal and cultural

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<sup>7</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs Identity?', in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), pp. 1-17 (p. 4).

constraints as other French immigrants. On the one hand, citizenship theoretically imbues them with the same rights to work, residence and religion as their metropolitan counterparts. At the same time, however, the reality of racial and ethnic difference often compounds this implicit equality; for example, Antilleans are often assumed at first glance to be illegal immigrants from a random number of African countries, and the prejudices directed against these groups tend to be automatically displaced onto them. And it is here that the trenchant paradoxes of belonging and otherness make their initial appearance, in a particularly French way that emerges directly from the universalist model instantiated by the French Revolution. As David Beriss writes: 'Assimilation has been promised to immigrants at the price of abandoning public attachment to their cultures of origin.'<sup>8</sup> In an ironic reversal, however, it is precisely this cultural and linguistic specificity undergirding their *antillanité* that these Caribbean departmental migrants have not only attempted to hold on to, but have also used to assert their cultural distinctiveness, construct Caribbean community groups on the mainland, and lambaste the limitations of the French ideal of assimilation, even as they try to construct effective means of mainland mobilization and recognition. These are typically based on race, as Michel Giraud writes: 'Given the particular nature of the problems, notably racism, which the Antillean peoples must face in continental France, they are reduced to emphasizing their 'difference', since that is the only criterion they can use for justifying their specific claims.'<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the paradoxical nexus of race and nation is at the core of this conundrum of exclusion and community, as Beriss continues: 'As

French citizens, Antilleans are cultural insiders, but as dark-skinned postcolonials, they are visibly marked as outsiders.'<sup>10</sup> It is in this moment of paradoxical exile within the centre, when they must first come to terms with being a minority group within a larger ethnocultural whole, that many Antilleans first learn to value and inscribe their *antillanité*.

One result of this French Caribbean nexus of departmentalism and citizenship is the appearance in the metropole of a growing and reductionist pattern of stereotyping based on race, in which many Antillean citizens of France are often assumed to be extra/legal immigrants or part of an amorphous group of 'others' for whom assimilation into Frenchness is deemed to be largely impossible. In this way, the telling incongruities of modern-day France work to subvert, or at least to expose the limitations of the country's vaunted universalist claims when faced with the incontrovertible presence of racial difference. Indeed, the concomitant, if unheralded ghettoization arising unbidden from the waves of immigrant (re)colonization of the metropole, find their roots in the racial hierarchies grounding French colonialism and the *mission civilisatrice*. For if France's three hundred year-long colonial undertaking—in regions as far-flung as the Caribbean, North America, sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb, the Middle East and Southeast Asia—was implicitly predicated on the recognition of racial difference and its corollaries of superiority and inferiority, domination and submission, then such long-inculcated patterns of thought and action cannot be swept away as easily as, say, signing a treaty according independence to a former colonial possession. In other words, then, these long-standing perceptions of difference and duality—along with their underlying perceptions of race and, indeed, their implications for a unitary Frenchness—are precisely

<sup>8</sup> David Beriss, *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), p.xviii.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Giraud, 'The Antillean in France: Trends and prospects', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27.4 (July 2004), 622-40 (p. 623).

<sup>10</sup> *Black Skins, French Voices*, p.xviii.

the attitudes that contemporary 'postcolonial' France cannot shake off. As Etienne Balibar claims: 'Racism in France is essentially colonial, not in terms of a 'leftover' from the past but rather in terms of the continuing production of contemporary relations.'<sup>11</sup> In refusing to acknowledge, or to account for, the fragmentation of Frenchness, or its pluralization into a simultaneity of identities or positionalities, then, French subjects are tacitly refusing to come to terms both with the racism that undergirds social relations in contemporary France—and whose tensions explode, from time to time, into such events as the suburban uprising of November 2005—and with its dark origins in the French colonial experience.

In a sense, then, any assertion of their cultural distinctiveness and difference on the part of the *Franco-Antillais* is implicitly a strategy of resistance and survival, as David Beriss suggests:

Despite their legal status and their socialization into French culture, their categorization with immigrants makes it impossible for Antilleans in France to claim that they are simply French. They are linked by origin and skin color to the kinds of people who, in the French view, are unable to adopt French culture. They become immigrants, part of the 'immigrant problem' in French society.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, despite the fact that France's population of immigrant origin (i.e. both Arab and black) today stands at over 10% of the total, due in no small measure to governmental and

<sup>11</sup> Etienne Balibar, 'Sujets ou citoyens', *Les Temps modernes*, special issue entitled 'L'immigration maghrébine en France: Les faits et les mythes', 452.3-4 (1984), p.1745.

<sup>12</sup> *Black Skins, French Voices*, pp. 20-21.

industrial recruitment policies, it is the imposition of this outsider status that lies at the core of subsequent acts of cultural self-assertion. Maxim Silverman clarifies the conundrum and its corollaries well:

Racism does not stop, as do the statistics, with the acquisition of French nationality. People from the French overseas departments (French Guinea [*sic*], Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Réunion) are not foreigners; neither are the 'French Muslims' (Harkis) who fought for France in the Algerian war of independence and were largely repatriated to France with the 'pieds noirs' after 1962; neither are those of Algerian parents who were born in Algeria before 1962 [...]. However [...] they are frequently classified *popularly* as immigrants due to the contemporary racialised association between immigration, those of North African origin, and blacks. On the other hand, white non-French Europeans resident in France (especially from Portugal, Italy and Spain) [...] are less likely to suffer the stigma attached to immigration today.<sup>13</sup>

As the empire writes back to the centre, then, and migrant citizens are made to confront such colonially based essentialisms, resorting to a doubled identitarian nomenclature—French and West Indian, Franco-Antillais—is both increasingly common and increasingly understandable. It is also crucial to note that such binary readings of the migrant perspective can apply in equal measure to those 'non-

<sup>13</sup> Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.37-38.

migrant' arrivants displaced from the nation-state's periphery to its centre.

The pressing presence of this French Caribbean migrant community has thus faced a number of particular challenges, even as its burgeoning presence inexorably changed the ethnocultural face of the metropole; indeed, as statistical surveys have shown, the three island DOMs of Guadeloupe, Martinique and Réunion furnished fully 86% of the more than 357,000 *domiens* in the Hexagon in 1999 born in their territories of origin, a figure which had been multiplied by a factor of fifteen in less than fifty years.<sup>14</sup> This demographic phenomenon had, in a sense, been unleashed by the implications of departmentalization in 1946, but many of the *domiens* incited to departure by this freedom of movement ultimately came face-to-face with limited labour opportunities, as Michel Giraud points out:

This great wave of migration was primarily composed of under-skilled people from the lower walks of society. The 'proletarianization' of emigration from Guadeloupe and Martinique changed the nature of the Antillean immigrant community in France [...]. This was despite the fact that—given that most of them found positions in the public sector—they benefited from better employment opportunities than foreign immigrants. Their situation in the public sector was typified by dismal promotion prospects, since more than two-thirds of them (compared with less than half of all French workers) were occupied in the sector's least-

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<sup>14</sup> See 'Un quart des personnes nées aux Antilles vit dans l'hexagone', *Antiane*, 52 (mai 2002), 15-18 (pp. 15-16).

qualified categories. They were often hospital maids or orderlies, service personnel in crèches and school canteens, menial government employees, Post Office or city transport workers. In the private sector, where the vast majority of Antillean are today blue-collar workers, their skills status kept falling with every successive wave of immigration [...]. The Antillean population residing in France has been slipping towards joining the most underprivileged sections of French society.<sup>15</sup>

Somewhat paradoxically, the result of this intersection of economic and demographic patterns has largely been the marginalization or erasure of differential subjectivity within a context of Frenchness, as the stereotyping of this substantial body of migrants has tended to subsume their cultural, political, and identitarian heterogeneity into an overall framework of universalist exclusion.

Interestingly, however, a planned form of demographic exclusion is what these migrants encountered upon their arrival in the promised land of the metropole. Catalyzed by the practice of providing suburban housing allocations for migrant workers by employers both public and private, these housing projects soon became the home for French Caribbean migrant citizens in large numbers. This differential cultural presence came to dominate the large public housing estates in the northern and eastern suburbs—Aulnay-sous-Bois, Maisons-Alfort, Garges-les-Gonesse—and its myriad influences meant that, in fairly short order, the ethnocultural *métissage* of the French Caribbean islands was recreated in microcosmic communities across the metropolitan landscape, but

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<sup>15</sup> 'The Antillean in France', pp. 626-27.

particularly visible in Paris and its environs. On the one hand, then, while this incipient pluralism of metropolitan *francité* remained largely unacknowledged and addressed, doubtless in large part due to its threatening character, its intrinsic exclusionary patterns were extended by the implicit French application of the term *immigré(e)* to all minority groups, regardless of demographic origin. This perception of 'outsiderness' engenders a precipitous double bind for the Antillean departmental subject, as Freedman and Tarr point out:

The French use the term 'immigré (immigrant) to refer not only to those who have migrated from another country into France, but also to those of ethnic origin within France, and particularly those whose ethnic origins lie in France's ex-colonies in Africa and Asia. Thus a woman who was born in France, has been brought up in French society and has French nationality, but whose grandparents originally migrated to France from Vietnam, for example, will still find herself labelled as an 'immigrant'. The same is true of ethnic minority communities in France originating from Martinique and Guadeloupe, even though these are still French territories. The choice of words to describe those of immigrant origin is a clear sign of the way in which dominant French discourses construct their post-colonial minorities as 'Other', a consequence of which is their exclusion from full citizenship rights.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Jane Freedman and Carrie Tarr, 'Introduction', in Freedman and Tarr (eds), *Women, Immigration and Identities in France* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), p. 2.

As assumptions of extra-hexagonal origin—and, often, illegal entry—exacerbate the tribulations of the mainland experience for the Franco-Antillais, it is little wonder then that so many of them claim to have discovered, or realized, their *antillanité* when confronted with the true face of Frenchness, and the tensions emerging from the space of the new metropolitan 'home' and its paradoxical corollary of partial presence within the 'foreign' territory of the metropole. As a result, given the extent to which stereotypes of otherness stemming from the category of the extra-hexagonal undermine the assumptions undergirding the inability of such subjects ever to aspire to or attain 'Frenchness,' our own assumptions regarding the framing and functioning of such categories must be interrogated and reassessed.

An obvious and rather pointed example of the culmination of such postcolonial policies is the recent minority-driven riots in France. Following the government- and industry-driven origins of the immigrant influx, many immigrant workers were warehoused in the high-rise 'cités' that border many cities, funnelling their occupants directly to and from work while keeping them segregated from mainstream urban culture. For example, public transport served to take these uneducated working class Arabs and blacks directly to and from the factories, but provided few links to other destinations, whether for shopping or recreation (or shopping *as* recreation). These aging 'cités' are now characterized by graffiti, broken elevators that remain unrepaired, heating systems left dysfunctional in winter, and a general air of shabbiness and disrepute, along with few commercial amenities or outlets. The result is a generation of youth defined through dual, or displaced subjectivities; born in France and often bilingual in Creole or Arabic, they remain, on the one hand, unfamiliar with the country and culture into which their parents were born, but, on the other, feel marginalized, excluded, invisible and inconsequential in the country in which they live.