Postcoloniality

The French Dimension

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Contents

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Introduction

In many ways, the erstwhile European colonial powers are still living in the postcolonial age, in spite of indications that a new era is coming into place. They remain profoundly marked by the lasting impact of their imperialist adventures, as do those whose lands were brought under imperial control, though to varying degrees and in different ways. Their economies and societies, their cultures and values, their relations with other countries, even their present demographic make-up, all bear the imprint of the colonial past.

However, while Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal share many of the main traits of their history and its legacy, there are also clear differences between them. France is not living through the postcolonial experience in exactly the same way as its neighbours. Similarly, its former colonies and protectorates bear the distinct marks of their specific experiences of French rule, influence and culture.

Whether one attributes the rise of the European empires to an almost absent-minded process of chance development, to a systemic and determined set of structural processes or to the triumph of the will, born out of a sense of mission, there are certainly pronounced differences with regard to the ideologies and discourses, through which the different powers rationalised their imperialist enterprises, as well as the systems of rule and administration they set in place. These differences are also reflected in the counter-discourses that developed to challenge the imperial hegemony of the various colonial empires. Moreover, these ideological differences have continued beyond the formal end of empire, assuming new forms appropriate to the changing global context.

It is the specificity of the French dimension of postcoloniality that forms the main object of this book, which in no way intends to provide a comprehensive history of all aspects of French imperialism. It will become clear, however, that this specificity cannot be equated with autonomy. In the first place, the French imperialist dynamic has been from the outset part and parcel of the global phenomenon of imperialism that has by now affected practically all areas of the planet. Furthermore, the interrelations and interactions have not been confined to the economic, political and military domain, but have also operated in the domain of culture and ideas. The imperial powers have never hesitated to borrow certain concepts or values from each other when it was opportune to do so. This is just as true in the case of the anti-imperialist struggles, where the common dimension to the struggle was often grasped through recourse to an internationalist perspective.

In the case of all the European imperial powers, there had developed, at more or less the same time, the same underlying processes that made these countries look beyond their own borders for wealth acquisition, trade and later territory. Similarly, the formal end of each empire did not occur in a vacuum, but was part of a global process of decolonisation and restructuring of power relations.

Nonetheless, the hegemonic discourse of French imperialism assumed specific distinctive forms, as did the counter-hegemonic discourses, which arose to challenge it. This specific distinctiveness has persisted into the contemporary period.

The early voyages of discovery and opportunities for enrichment through trade and plunder were intimately linked with the development of capitalism in Europe and provided the wealth and capital that were to serve as the engine of this development, transforming the economies of the countries concerned in an irreversible historical process. Thereafter, the development of mercantile and then industrial and finance capitalism was inextricably intertwined with the drive to gain control of the resources of as much of the rest of the globe as was feasible.

This was a process that was unlike any imperial endeavour humanity had seen before. As such, it bears only tenuous and superficial comparison to the earlier empires of antiquity, in spite of the spurious comparisons that have been made from time to time, especially with the Roman Empire, particularly in the triumphalist heyday of the British Empire. These were normally made with the aim of magnifying its grandeur, and stressing the benefits of civilisation, which, as in the case of the Romans, are always felt to outweigh the brutalities of conquest. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, for instance, points to the extent to which the Pax Romana was a role model for the ideologues of British imperialism:

> A century ago, for imperialist Britain (and for other European states with imperial ambitions), the Roman Empire represented a success story. Rome's story of conquest, at least in Europe and around the Mediterranean, was imitated, but never matched, by leaders from Charlemagne to Napoleon. The dream that one could not only conquer, but in so doing create a Pax Romana, a vast area of peace, prosperity and unity of ideas, was a genuine inspiration. (Wallace-Hadrill 2001: 1)

This is not to say that this analogy was always applied uncritically. A famous instance of the use of the analogy between the two empires is found in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, where in the first few pages Marlow reflects on the Romans' empire in Britain. He concludes of the Romans that 'they were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force' (Conrad (1902)/2002: 7), unlike the modern-day imperialists, who were inspired by the 'idea' of the colonial mission and, first and foremost, the devotion to 'efficiency'. As P.J. Marshall has pointed out, the extent to which Britain ever had the means or the will to impose a Pax Britannica was in fact limited in practice (Marshall 1996: 33). Moreover, in the case of France, although references to antiquity had figured large at the time of the French Revolution and the

First (Napoleonic) Empire, French ideologues of later imperialist expansion were more likely to appropriate the garb of a modernising, Enlightenment-inspired project, rather than focusing on examples from the past empires of antiquity.

Such attempts, successful or otherwise, to conquer overseas territories in antiquity and the Middle Ages were of quite a different order from the modern imperialist endeavours, notwithstanding the lasting resonance of Alexander's conquests throughout Asia and his transcendence into myth in parts of India, or the lasting legacy of the crusades in the mindsets of both Europeans and Arabs. It has also become a feature of the 'postcolonial' period for some to cast a shroud of relativism over the imperialist past and relegate it to the dustbin of history, like a burnt-out firework, with no further capacity to impact on the contemporary world. Yet the processes that were set in train and were to become the first steps in the creation of an integrated global capitalist economy are very far from running out of steam, even if, as with steam-power, their original forms have been superseded by new and ever more powerful ones.

The use of the term 'postcolonial' to refer to the latest stage in this process requires some discussion here. It has become common currency to use this as a blanket term, incorporating widely different domains of discourse. On the one hand, it is used to characterise the contemporary historical phase in global economic and political relations. It is also used to characterise the diasporic forces that have led to the displacement of groups of people from the former colonies. In the theoretical domain, it has come to be associated with a particular body of critical theory, especially, although not exclusively, in the field of literary and cultural studies.

Moreover, if the term is considered appropriate for a very large number of different fields, it is, at the same time, notoriously ambiguous. This is the case even if we leave aside the loose use of the term as a synonym or substitute for its frequent partner, the 'postmodern'. The prefix 'post', itself, is given different semantic interpretations by those who care to make these distinctions. Thus, even when 'postcolonial' is interpreted in a strictly chronological sense, there are ambiguities. Does it mean only the period after decolonisation, or the whole period, beginning with the first instances of colonisation and possibly including its present ongoing effects?

This is perhaps symptomatic of a wider terminological difficulty, relating to the common confusion around the term 'colonial' itself and its derivatives. The term 'colonialism' has come to be preferred to that of 'imperialism', or even 'empire', to characterise the European empires. Indeed, this is particularly true of much, if not most, of French discourse, including that which has as its content an anti-imperialist critique.

One of the reasons for this can no doubt be traced back to the primary use of the term 'empire' to denote the various Napoleonic regimes in France itself. A reference to the 'Empire' more often than not relates to the First Empire of Napoleon Bonaparte and, secondarily, to the Second Empire of Louis Napoleon. This certainly provides a partial explanation for the favoured use of 'colonialism' or 'the colonial empire' to make clear the distinction between these two supposedly different entities, though it is clear that there are interrelations and overlap between the two that have often been ignored or insufficiently developed.

Yet the substitution of colonialism for imperialism does raise considerable difficulties, for colonialism is not synonymous with imperialism. It relates rather to a specific territorial stage of the latter phenomenon, when the earlier trading and looting stage had given way to the conquest, acquisition and/or control of land and political power in the colonies, with or without settler colonisation. This stage is now largely superseded, as a result of decolonisation, although significant vestiges remain, both in terms of a number of colonies still directly controlled by a colonial power, as in the case of the French DOM-TOM (overseas *départements* or territories), or in the ongoing, permanent settler presence in former colonies of settlement, in North and South America, Southern Africa and Australasia.

Imperialism began its development with the emergence of capitalism in Europe. The booty derived from trade, plunder and enslavement provided the capital for industrialisation at home. The export of labour to the new colonial territories, most notably through the forcible transportation of enslaved Africans, but also of bonded and convict labour from Europe itself and parts of Asia, enabled the establishment of plantation economies, in which the capitalist mode of production found its most brutal mode of expression. The subsequent export of capital overseas carried further the export of capitalism as an economic system. The momentum of imperialism is provided by the intrinsic expansionist economic forces driving capitalism forwards into a globalising system, operating at many different and unequal stages of development throughout the territories that have come under its sway.

Thus, although there are clear distinctions to be made between the different stages of diachronic development, as well as different synchronic variations in the operation of this process worldwide, capitalism and imperialism cannot be distinguished as two separate processes that just happen to occur simultaneously. They are integral to each other, as part of the same process, primarily a process of the economy, although developing also its characteristic political and military aspects, with their own particular institutions and ideologies, which then often acquired a semi-autonomous life, sometimes even in contradiction with the short-, medium- or long-term requirements of the development of the economy.

Thus, colonialism was only a particular stage in the overall development of the global capitalist imperialist economy, which since decolonisation has gone on from strength to strength. The end of European colonialism did not signal the end of capitalist imperialism, nor did it necessarily signify the end of the form of colonialism per se, which could reassert itself as and when required. Not only did the former colonial powers continue to keep up the momentum of the development of capitalist imperialism, without having to maintain the expensive baggage of a colonial state administrative and military apparatus – a process that was inadequately theorised in the immediate aftermath of decolonisation as 'neocolonialism' (Nkrumah 1965). Other powers, which had a record untarnished by colonial blight or which were even able to cloak themselves in the mantle of anticolonialism, such as the USA, were able to join in the process and take it forward to a new stage. The growing economic presence of China in contemporary Africa and elsewhere is also instructive in this respect.

However, it is not just the nature of the whole historical process of capitalist imperialism that is distorted through the isolation of this one part of it, European colonialism, and the substitution of this part for the whole. The privileging of the notion of colonialism also has the effect of exempting or exonerating key players in the capitalist imperialist process, as well as limiting its spatial effects, for colonialism deals only with the relations of power between the European metropolis and the colonised territories in Africa, America, Asia and Australasia. To characterise these relations, the favoured image is that of the wheel, with the metropolitan hub or centre from which radiate the spokes connecting it to the periphery. The lines are simple, direct; it is a simple bilateral process, in which direction comes from the centre and tribute returns from the periphery. As such, however, it is totally inadequate as a representation of the complex, multidimensional set of relations that come into play as a result of the tentacular spread of capitalist imperialism and its unequal levels of development, involving a multiplicity of sub-forms. Even in its direct colonial form, the process brings into being a number of mediating factors at different levels; local participants are engaged at various points in the process and are thus tied into the system, which works not just for the interests of the colonising power, but for all sorts of different median interests too.

It is obviously too simplistic to assume that the casting off of the metropolitan colonial yoke would in itself suffice to break the inexorable progress of capitalist imperialism. A clear case in point is the American colonial experience, where internal colonialism and genocide persisted, indeed intensified, after the end of the British dominion, not to mention the external expansion of American power at a later stage, without the overt trappings of colonialism to begin with, though this was to come later.

For all these reasons, I have chosen to use the global expression of capitalist imperialism to describe the ongoing phenomenon with which we are dealing here. This is a process that arose at a specific moment in history, with particular economic, political, military and cultural characteristics, and was clearly linked with the development of knowledge, science, technology and finance, as well as with new ways of organising the economy along capitalist lines. Accompanying this process was the associated development of new ways of perceiving and representing the world and relations between its peoples, along with new discourses for their articulation. All of these aspects would change in an ongoing process of development, transforming themselves to meet new challenges, to solve new problems, to exploit new opportunities. And just as knowledge, science and technology adapted, refined and developed new theoretical and practical knowledge, so too would the cultural and ideological representations be transformed over the course of these developments. In the latter case, however, as we shall see, some of these forms were to prove strikingly resilient. Having come into being in particular historical circumstances, they acquired a life of their own and have tended to remain on the shelf, even if in a state of ossification, alongside more modern versions.

It is the survival and the transformation of these old ideological and cultural forms, as well as the development of new forms of discourse in what has come to be known as the 'postcolonial' world that form the major object of this study. As such,

we shall be looking at ways in which those discourses have retained their power under new conditions, as well as the ways in which they have had to adapt to retain their appeal and capacity to act as vehicles for interpreting the world. Integral to this will be an examination of the counter-discourses that come into being to articulate challenges to the dominant discourse and also contribute to the process of forcing it to adapt. Neither can be considered in a vacuum, but they work upon each other in a process of mutual interrelation, as is the case with the other processes at stake in the domains of the economy, politics and so on.

At this stage, it is perhaps opportune to stress that this discussion is mainly concerned with those discourses that are intimately connected with the question of power, even if the connection sometimes appears to be indirect. In other words, what is ultimately at stake is the issue of discourse as ideology, rather than discourse per se. Secondly, it is taken as axiomatic that ideological discourse cannot be separated from economic and political relations, which will inevitably impinge during the course of the argument, but cannot be fully treated in the space of this text.

However, this book is not simply concerned with discourse/ideology as such, although, as it will emerge, discourse has a very special role to play in the sphere of French 'postcoloniality'. The question of theory is very much at the heart of the matter, with all the problems the definition of theory and its differentiation from ideology entail. The problem of truth, or the objectivity of knowledge, cannot be ducked, however. It is crucial to an understanding of the world and to our ability to change it. It is best therefore to face this issue head-on at the outset and set out the assumptions that will be operative.

The first assumption is that there is such a thing as history. The world as it affects human beings is not changeless, or an endless repetition, without any intrinsic meaning. On the contrary, historical processes derive their meaning from, and for, human beings.

Moreover, historical reality at any given time is the totality of the processes, relations, institutions and ideas that operate in the economic, social, political, cultural, ideological and theoretical domains. These different domains exist in complex interactions, in which each domain may assume a greater relative importance in any particular historical conjuncture. However, the economic processes in which human beings engage in the production of the basic material necessities of life and their development in the course of history, together with the economic relations that govern their organisation, remain of prime importance as a factor in the development of the other historical processes.

The final set of assumptions concerns the nature and role of ideas in the historical process. Ideas, representations and meanings are seen as developing, not in a vacuum, but in an intimate relation with material processes, albeit with a life and a variable systemic logic of their own. It is taken as a basic premise that knowledge is possible, if never absolute. Following on from this, it is considered that ideas, articulated through discourses, have different levels of validity and that there are criteria against which this validity can be measured.

It will be clear that these premises are at variance with much of what comes under the blanket headings of poststructuralist, postmodernist and postcolonialist

thought. The intention here is not to engage in a systematic critique of these bodies of discourse, but to deal with particular issues as they arise.

There will be two areas of particular focus. The first concerns the particular status of counter-discourses that arise to challenge dominant forms of hegemonic discourse and ideology. The second involves the question of the validity of ideas, representations and meanings, whether they explicitly aspire to the status of theory or not, and how this validity is to be judged.

At the end of the day, it is assumed that while there is no absolute truth or knowledge, fixed for all time, there are nonetheless distinctions to be made between theories that satisfy certain criteria of validity better than others. The choice of criteria is, of course, ultimately a matter of personal choice. The choices that are made will nonetheless clearly be influenced to a very large extent by objective factors related to one's particular position in a particular society at a particular time and subjective factors, in which political choices play an important role. These choices involve identification or non-identification with particular social groups, genders, generations and classes, as well as a conscious or passive inclination to accept the status quo or to work towards change, partial or global.

Underlying all of what follows are two basic criteria: first, objectivity and, secondly, critique. Neither of these criteria is considered to be value-free, but they are based on certain assumptions of value. In the first case, objectivity is grounded in the value of knowledge itself, implicit in working towards an ever-closer understanding of the real world in all its aspects. Objectivity is thus understood not just in terms of the rationality of a scientific proof, but also in terms of real practical knowledge, which can be tested through its effects. The second criterion relates to the critical value of ideas, or, in other words, their capacity to challenge assumptions and assist in the process of social change.

Further problematic issues will be dealt with as they arise. The remainder of this introduction will explore further the impact of the development of global capitalist imperialism in the specific domains of land, space and time and the way in which notions and conceptions were reconfigured and transformed through this historical process.

The Land Issue

Within the time frame of the inception and expansion of the process of global dissemination of the capitalist mode of production, or imperialism, to use the shorthand expression, the actual occupation of overseas territory by the imperial powers could be considered to represent no more than a stage in the process, albeit a significant one, except in the cases of settler colonies, such as Algeria, Kenya, South Africa, Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, in Africa, most of North and South America and Australasia, where the settlement became permanent. In the first stages of imperialism, the acquisition of wealth through trade and plunder was seen as the prime goal and reward of the voyages of trade and expansion. It went hand in hand with the battle for the control of the seas, essential to the continuation of the freedom to venture to new parts of the globe to extract new sources of riches.

The takeover of land, with or without colonial settlement, eventually took place for a number of reasons. In some cases, it was necessary to secure trading and other economic interests, to ensure that these activities could proceed without hindrance. In the case of colonial settlement, a combination of problems at home – including the break-up of feudalism, resulting in the loss of livelihood and access to land, as well as religious and political persecution – and the apparent opportunities to make a living from the cultivation of the land made emigration to the colonies an attractive proposition for some. For others, it did not represent a choice: taken into slavery or other forms of bondage, transported as criminals or as political detainees, these unwilling transportees were to form the labour force needed for large-scale plantation agriculture, organised along capitalist lines.

In Algeria, opportunities for settlement were seized as part of a number of forays into social engineering and social experimentation. Followers of Saint-Simon and Prosper Enfantin saw the possibilities it offered to put their ideas for economic and social progress into action (Spillmann 1981; Adamson 2002). The French government also saw the potential. In the early years following the conquest, orphans were shipped out from Toulon to provide wives for the new settlers, made up of army veterans, in the so-called 'military colonies' (Girardet 1993). After the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, their populations were encouraged to settle in Algeria to escape German control. Other colonists made their own way from many different European countries. In 1840, there were 28,000 Europeans in Algeria. By 1848, this figure had increased to 110,000. In 1846 alone, 46,000 had arrived (Girardet 1993).

Control of the land became necessary at a certain stage of development of imperialism, as part of its general logic of forcing through the transformation of the economic mode of production and globalising the spread of capitalism. In specific terms, it allowed for the development of large-scale capitalist agriculture and primary commodity production to take place unfettered by the restraints of feudalism and, subsequently, permitted the conditions to be created for the introduction of industrial capitalism with the export of capital.

Yet control of the soil itself at the microeconomic level was not the prime purpose in the non-settler colonies. The striking depiction of the slicing up of the globe and the colouring in of vast tracts of the surface of the earth on maps and in drawings represent to a far greater extent the push for control at the level of macroeconomics and politics.

In the colonies of settlement, on the other hand, the appropriation of land by the colonists was direct and often brutal, though cloaked in ideological rationalisations of one kind and another. As Jomo Kenyatta summed up the process: 'When the white man came to Africa, he had the Bible and we had the land. And now? We have the Bible and he has the land' (quoted in Mazrui 1990: 6).

In Algeria, over the period of French control, the major part of the land passed into state or private settler ownership, dispossessing the Algerian population. The fictional character of Mahmoud, in Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma*, illustrates this process well. His ancestors' land has been whittled down to a mere two hectares, as though with each new generation the ground just melted away: 'Mahmoud may well be

seventy or eighty years old – his age doesn't really matter. He has lost too many of his children. He has managed to save these two hectares of land beyond the clearing, whereas his forefathers owned sixty hectares. It seems as though the land of his fathers melts beneath the feet of the newborn generation' (Kateb Yacine (1956)/1981: 196).

As Sartre pointed out, the appropriation of Algerian land was the clearest case of theft in the history of French colonialism. This expropriation was rationalised in a number of ways. Following the practice in other colonies, military campaigns could serve as a cover for the occupation of uncultivated land, in the guise of operational requirements for pacification purposes. Indeed, Bugeaud, during his time as governor from 1840 to 1847, envisaged settlement of the land by former soldiers who had finished their term of service, to produce *colonies militaires* (Girardet 1993), although these were not ultimately successful.

In addition to this military rationale, an often-heard argument employed in the discourse making the case for settler control of the colonised land was that of the *mise en valeur*, or the value added to the soil by the input of the settler's labour and technical expertise, in order to achieve its full potential in terms of production and profit. The logic behind the *mise en valeur* notion was that this could only be achieved with the injection of European expertise. However, it was not in fact the uncultivated or underused land that was of interest to those seeking to transform Algeria into a settler colony; rather it was the fertile land, all of which was already under cultivation at the time of the Algerian conquest, making Algeria largely self-sufficient in food. Moreover, much of the land taken into state control was promptly taken over by speculators, who proceeded to sell it at a large profit straight away, without any input or improvement to the soil (Girardet 1993). Although the argument of the *mise en valeur* was characteristic of the attempt to justify the continuation of the rights of settler ownership in the case of Algeria, it was not of course specific to French colonial discourse, but was very typical of other settler discourses, for instance in the context of the colonies of southern Africa.

In fact, the concentration of land in the hands of the European settlers could only be achieved at the expense of the Algerians who had previously farmed it. All methods were deemed acceptable to further this objective (Sartre 1956: 1374–75). According to figures given by Sartre, the Algerians lost two-thirds of their land within a century (Sartre 1956: 1376). In 1850, twenty years after the conquest, 115,000 hectares were held by colonial settlers. This figure had increased to 1,000,600 in 1900 and 2,703,000 hectares in 1950.[1] In addition, the French state held eleven million hectares in its own right, compared with seven million hectares left to the Algerians.

Much of this land had been confiscated from Muslim religious bodies in the early stages of colonisation (Girardet 1993). The policy of *cantonnement* of nomadic tribes resulted in the further appropriation of tribal common land, which had previously been used for passage or pasture (Girardet 1993). The confiscation of land as part of the punishment for resistance and rebellion was also a familiar method. Following the Kabyle Revolt of 1871, 446,000 hectares were appropriated in reprisals, along with a fine of eleven million francs (Girardet 1993).

In the non-settler colonies, ownership of land in itself was not the key issue, although the transformation of the legal framework for ownership of land appears to have been crucial. Capitalism institutionalised private property in land and imposed a variety of legal frameworks on the different colonies to eliminate previous collectivised ownership of land, organised either through a notional central power or in smaller operational units. Thus, the process of transforming land into a market commodity, making it the object of buying and selling, and removing the labourers from the land, sometimes forcibly, broke organic/ancestral links, permanently transforming the relationship to the land.

This was a common feature of colonial occupation in the case of the various colonial powers, even though the methods and the rationalisations of the practices might have differed significantly. In India, for example, in the northern and eastern regions of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, UP and so on, the British, for instance, through Cornwallis's 1793 Act on Permanent Zemindari, created an intermediary class of landowners, with the function of collecting taxes from the peasantry, from whom their interests naturally became divorced. The *ryotwari* system, introduced early in the nineteenth century in the Madras and Bombay presidencies, made the peasantry into proprietary holders of government land, with the obligation of paying a rent-tax fixed at such a high level that non-payment and consequent loss of the land often ensued (Marx, 'The Future Results of the British Rule in India' (1853), in Marx and Engels (1959)/1975: 30). These transformations of the traditional landholding structures were brought about, not least, to enable the effective taxation of the peasantry, in a system in which a sizeable proportion of the revenue derived from the land tax. For instance, H. Palmer quoted a figure of £20 million in land tax revenue, out of a total of £64 million collected by provincial governments in India in 1937 (Palmer 1942).

The need to increase revenue, in the face of the British East India Company's financial difficulties, had also been the prime motive for the direct annexation of land, as set out in a minute in council in 1848, in which, according to Marx commenting on Disraeli's speech to Parliament of 27 July 1857 in an article published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, 'was laid down the principle, almost without disguise, that the only mode by which an increased revenue could be obtained was by enlarging the British territories at the expense of the native princes' (Marx, 'The Indian Question' in Marx and Engels (1959)/1975: 46). This was achieved through the setting aside of the principle of adoption, in the absence of natural heirs, giving the Company and later the state the right of annexation of property in such cases, as well as by the calling into question of title and the right to exemption from land tax. None other than Disraeli himself was to call this practice into question, no doubt in defence of the sacred rights of private and especially landed property, making it clear that revenue was the prime consideration for the government 'to disturb the settlement of property', in a country where the land tax was 'the whole taxation of the state' (quoted in Marx and Engels (1959)/1975: 47). After the retaking of Lucknow in 1858, there was a wholesale confiscation of the lands of Oudh by the British government, by way of reprisals for involvement in the

uprising, variously known as the Indian Mutiny or the First Indian War of Independence (Marx and Engels (1959)/1975: 132–43).

The discourse that articulated this process from the point of view of the coloniser, as well as the feelings of dispossession on the part of the colonised or enslaved that resulted from it, had little to do with the actual irreversible nature of the changes effected, which affected not just actual ownership and ownership rights, but the qualitative use to which the land was put, as Edward Said has pointed out (Said 1993: 271–73). The capitalisation of land was the essential basis for the transformation of the whole economy along capitalist lines. However, the discourse used to justify it emphasised due legal process; the rule of law and administrative rationality were portrayed as major contributions to progress.

While this was a common theme in the discourses of the imperial powers, there were nonetheless significant differences in the forms that these discourses assumed. In Algeria, although much of the land was acquired through the unsubtle method of confiscation as a punishment for resistance activity, the principle of equality was also brought into service. This was done through the aberrant use of the inheritance provisions set down in the Napoleonic *code civil*, enshrining the principle of equal inheritance of family property.

This code ensured the fragmentation of the traditionally collective tribal property and thus its gradual purchase by speculators. In 1873, commissioners were given the task of transforming large tracts of undivided property into a jigsaw of individual lots, at the time of inheritance, some of which bore little relation to reality. In the *douar* of Harrar, the commissioner in charge discovered fifty-five joint owners of a total amount of eight hectares of land. It only needed one of these to be 'persuaded' to ask for redistribution for the complexities of the ensuing procedure to bring the whole lot on to the market, where it could be snapped up for next to nothing by European speculators. Thus, the introduction of the code civil had the effect of deliberately destroying the landownership system and consequently much of the social structure in Algeria, but it was nonetheless presented as one of the benefits of French civilisation (Sartre 1956: 1375).

Ownership and control of the land were not just about inheritance and property rights. There was a whole important ideological dimension to the way in which the relationship to the land was perceived. Issues concerning the relationship to the land were also articulated through various types of narrative discourses and, in particular, the modern novel, of which Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is a prime example. As Edward Said has put it: 'The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative' (Said 1993: xiii).

To what extent these matters of control over the land were ever actually decided in narratives, even when these were constituted as the political ideologies of nationhood, is certainly open to question. Yet there is no denying the importance of historical, fictional and other narratives in mapping, in the cultural consciousness, the differential positions of territorial entities in a hierarchy of controlled spaces that existed for the benefit of the metropolitan homeland:

> the *geographical* notation, the theoretical mapping and charting of territory that underlies Western fiction, historical writing, and philosophical discourse of the time. There is first the authority of the European observer – traveller, merchant, scholar, historian, novelist. Then there is the hierarchy of spaces by which the metropolitan centre and, gradually, the metropolitan economy are seen as dependent upon an overseas system of territorial control, economic exploitation, and a socio-cultural vision; without these stability and prosperity at home – 'home' being a word with extremely potent resonances – would not be possible. (Said 1993: 69)

Said has eloquently described the different social spaces of imperialism as they are articulated through the colonial literature of writers such as Kipling, Conrad, Haggard, Loti, Gide, Malraux and Camus, though, surprisingly, he leaves Hugo out of the frame. He has also described what he calls 'the actual geographical underpinnings' of the imperial relation, concluding that 'the actual geographical possession of land is what empire in the final analysis is all about' (Said 1993: 93). Indeed, for him, the geographical element is primary; he considers imperialism as 'an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control' (Said 1993: 271): 'At the moment when a coincidence occurs between real control and power, the idea of what a given place was (could be, might become), and an actual place – at that moment the struggle for empire is launched. This coincidence is the logic both for Westerners taking possession of land and, during decolonization, for resisting natives reclaiming it' (Said 1993: 93).

It is no surprise that the anticolonial struggles seized on the land issue as a primary concern. The recovery of the land of the nation was to be a key objective, whether this was expressed through the struggle to drive the coloniser from the territory or through movements to return to the land of exile. The reality, however, was that the relationship to the land had been permanently altered and there was to be no going back. In the final analysis, imperialism was not primarily about land, but about a global economic dynamic, which is still evolving in the present day.

The Reconfiguration of Global Geographical Space

In the same way as the expansion of global capitalism had brought in its train a characteristic view of world history, in which Europe dominated as the motor of human history, there had also been an effect on the way in which the geographical space in which imperialist relations were set was reconfigured. The world had been recentred with its focus now situated in Western Europe. In a quite literal way, the centre of the post-imperial world was shifted to Greenwich, where it was fixed and marked by the meridian dividing the east from the west.

In one sense, this was in line with previous civilisations, which had perceived their own sites to be at the hub of the universe, or at least that part which was known to them. For the ancient Greeks, it was at Delphi, marked by the omphalos, or navel

stone, to record the spot where the two eagles released by Zeus to find the centre of the world were reputed to have met with their beaks touching. In Roman times, all parts of the known world were conceived in relation to Rome, their distances marked on a pillar near the Arch of Severus, described as the navel of the world. Cuzco, the last capital of the Incas, has also been described as the navel of the world, as, indeed, have Easter Island and other places, including Iraq.[2] The thirteenth-century *mappa mundi* places Jerusalem at the centre of the world of Christendom and the very name of the Mediterranean Sea evokes the belief of those living on its shores that they were indeed at the centre of the earth.

Similarly, attempts to trace lines of reference across the world's surface to assist navigation go back to the world of antiquity. Eratosthenes, based in Alexandria, is credited with having made a surprisingly accurate measurement of the earth's circumference in approximately 240 BCE. In time, many countries drew up a line in reference to which they were able to pinpoint locations and prepare maps of their countries, such as those known as the Rome or the Washington meridians. The meridians mapped by France and Britain were, however, of another order. Both countries had aspirations for the universal status of their meridians and both were subsequently to engage in a battle to establish which of these meridians was to be the 'prime' meridian, not just for their own countries, but for the entire globe. This mapping of the globe in a uniform fashion marked a significant new departure and was closely connected to the development of universal systems governing both time and space. It was, of course, not just a matter that concerned national pride. The increasingly national and international dimensions of both the French and the British economies made it an eminently practical concern.

It was the French astronomer Abbé Jean Picard (1620–82) who had first measured the length of a degree of longitude, using this to develop work on the measurement of the earth. Building on this work, the Paris Observatory, constructed in 1667 by the architect Claude Perrault, acting for Colbert, was sited so that the Paris meridian ran exactly through the centre of the site.[3] The building was designed in such a way that each of its four sides faces directly north, south, east and west. The latitude upon which the south façade was set (48°50'11") marks the official latitude of Paris. The building can thus be said to mark the precise location of the centre of Paris.

However, the impetus for determining the precise location and measurement of the Paris meridian, from pole to pole, was provided by the quest for a more rational system of measurement, inspired by the French Revolution, which, in this area, as in others dominated by the vagaries of traditional ways of perceiving and doing things, wished to make a clean sweep. It was thus that the process to introduce the decimal metric system was initiated (Decree of 1 August 1793). It was intended as a universally applicable system, providing uniform, standard weights and measures, designed in accordance with more rational criteria than the mishmash of different units used under the *Ancien Régime*. In the Decree of 18 Germinal Year III – 7 April 1795 – (Article V), it was explicitly stated that the new units of measurement, e.g. metre, litre, franc, were to be described as 'Republican'. At the same time, it was hoped that other countries would be persuaded to join in and adopt the new

measures, which could serve as a universal system. The Provisional Agency for Weights and Measures made this clear, in an *'Adresse aux artistes'*, published on 11 Floréal, Year III, when it spoke of the uniformity, as a demand of the people 'in all times and in all places'.[4] In 1790, envoys had been sent to Spain, Britain and America to argue the merits of the system, and Thomas Jefferson showed interest in the new scheme (*Quid* 2000).

In keeping with the favoured decimal system, the metre was defined as one ten-millionth of the distance from the North Pole to the Equator.[5] So, in order to be able to determine and produce the standard metre, it was necessary to calculate the accurate measurement of the length of the Paris meridian. Surveys were undertaken from 1792 to 1799 by two astronomers, Jean-Baptiste Delambre and Pierre Méchain, whose adventures are documented in Denis Guedj's *La Méridienne* and *Le Mètre du monde* (Guedj 1987, 2000),[6] and then from 1806 to 1808, during the Napoleonic era, by the astronomer and politician François Arago, who was later to play a role in the abolition of slavery, and fellow scientist Jean-Baptiste Biot. The line extended across France, from Dunkirk in the north to Prats de Mollo in the south, just west of Perpignan, before crossing into Spain, via Barcelona, and across the Mediterranean via the Ballearics, into Africa, where it bisected Algeria into two roughly equal halves. The Paris meridian ran along a line that was 2°20'14" east of Greenwich, where the Royal Observatory had been created by Charles II in 1675, a few years after the Paris Observatory, and where the prime meridian was ultimately to be established.[7]

However, until the end of the nineteenth century, each country continued to choose for itself the system it would use for determining the zero reference point for longitude. Thus France used the Paris meridian for both maritime navigational purposes and land-based map making. Portugal used the Lisbon meridian. Some countries used different reference systems for land and sea, such as the United States, which adopted Greenwich for its sea charts and Washington for its land maps.

The need for a common standard at sea was pushed strongly at the first International Geographical Congress in Antwerp in 1871. However, there was no agreement. France was not prepared to give up without a fight its aspirations to have the Paris meridian recognised as the prime meridian, especially given its pioneering work in this field. If this could not be achieved, it hoped to persuade Britain to adopt the metric system as a quid pro quo for recognition of Greenwich. The bargaining continued until 1884, when, at the International Meridian Conference held in Washington, the Greenwich meridian was chosen as the compulsory reference for zero degree longitude, with only Brazil and San Domingo backing Paris's claim (San Domingo voted against, France and Brazil abstained).

The implications of a move to a universal standard were not limited to navigational questions and space; it also involved the growing need for the adoption of universal standards in time. Previously, there had been no agreement on how time should be measured. The de facto reference to the sun's position in the sky meant that there were great local and seasonal variations, both internationally and within individual nations, affecting such matters as the length of an hour and the length of

the day and night. In Britain, the standardisation of time nationally in the 1840s was directly related to the development of the railways and the need to be able to draw up a consistent timetable across the nation. This need was not restricted to Britain. The development of an increasingly internationalised economy, involving transnational transport and communications, made a universal time system essential, based on the recognition of a prime meridian at zero longitude. The Greenwich meridian was the favourite, since it was already used as the basis for the bulk of the navigational sea charts, used in maritime commerce, and also because the US railway system had already anticipated the agreement by opting for Greenwich as the basis of its own time-zone system in 1883, although the USA was not officially to bring in standard time until 1918.[8]

However, although Greenwich Mean Time was adopted as the universal basis for the world's time-zone system in Washington in 1884, the Paris meridian was not abandoned by France until 1911 for timekeeping and 1914 for navigational purposes. Even after 1911, this standard time was referred to as 'Paris Mean Time minus 9 minutes 21 seconds', rather than Greenwich Mean Time. The Paris meridian was also not abandoned altogether. French land maps, for instance, continue to use the Paris meridian as their reference point.

In fact, the pill was sugared by the establishment of the International Time Bureau (Bureau International de l'Heure – BIH) in Paris in 1912, which had the task of determining Universal Time in the basement of the Paris Observatory. With the replacement of Universal Time in the 1980s by Universal Coordinated Time, now more accurately determined by atomic clocks, it is now the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (Bureau International des Poids et Mesures) in Sèvres that establishes what this should be. Indeed, France remains today the overseer of the measuring systems, based on the international metric system of weights and measures, which has been widely adopted throughout the world, partly as a legacy of the Napoleonic influence throughout Europe as a result of conquest, but also because of its inherent rational practicality.

It had less success with the decimal time proposal, also thrown up by the Revolution. This was part of the move to introduce a new Revolutionary calendar to mark the beginning of a new era for the French people, *l'ère républicaine*. A decree of the Convention, dated 5 October 1793 (old-style), marks the establishment of this new era thus: 'L'ère des Français compte de la fondation de la république, qui a eu lieu le 22 septembre 1792 de l'ère vulgaire' (Article I).[9]

The institution of the Revolutionary calendar was a political move and had more to do with establishing a new Republican tradition, rather than a strictly rational approach. The decree stated that, since it had taken four years from the beginning of the Revolution to establish Republican government in France, each four-year period was henceforth to be known as a *Franciade*, the end of which was to be marked by a special *jour de la Révolution* (Article X), which would be celebrated with 'Republican games' (Article XVI). While the Revolutionary calendar based the new year on the solar cycle, divided into twelve months of thirty days each, with five extra days to complete the year, called 'jours complémentaires', there was an attempt to introduce

an element of decimalisation, through the division of each month into three ten-day 'décades', which had previously been used in ancient times in Egypt. There was also a clause (Article XI) that aimed to standardise the measurement of time in decimal style, with the division of each day into ten hours, in their turn divided into ten and so on down to the lowest measurable unit, although this measure was not intended for immediate implementation.[10] This was subsequently revised, in a later decree of 4 Frimaire, Year II of the Republic, to ten hours, divided into 100 decimal minutes, divided into 100 decimal seconds.[11]

The proposed decimalisation of time not only attempted to do away with local variations in the calculation of the time of day, which had hitherto been mainly based on the observation of the noonday sun, the 'meridian' in its other sense; it also attempted to standardise the length of a single hour, which previously had been variable depending on the solar cycle and the seasons. The standardisation of the length of the hour was not in fact properly put into practice in France until the approval of Paris Mean Time in 1816.[12] It was not until 1891 that Paris Mean Time applied to the whole of France, before being replaced by Universal Time in 1911.

Interest in the Paris meridian has been revived in recent years. Since 1995, the line of the meridian across Paris has been marked by 135 bronze plaques set in the ground along its route, created by the Dutch artist Jean Dibbets and known as the Arago markers. The rivalry between France and Britain was also reignited at the time of the second millennium celebrations, when the significance of Greenwich, as the zero point of the new millennium, was highlighted, especially with the creation of the Millennium Dome. Paris responded with plans to revitalise the Paris meridian by planting trees along its route in order to create a permanent rambling path and then organising a gigantic, fraternal picnic, with the table, decked with a bistro check tablecloth, stretching 700km from north to south, on 14 July 2000 (*Guardian*, 28 June 1999).

Interestingly, for something that had its origins in the development of modern science and the need for more accurate mapping of both France and the wider world, the celebrations surrounding the millennium in France based on the meridian, have aroused a whole new interest in the occult, based on the symbolism of this so-called 'Red Line', also known as the 'Axis Mundi'. Much has been made of the links to Christianity: the Paris Observatory was situated on the land of the Abbey of Port-Royal; a black Virgin was placed in the underground Oratory of the Observatory; the meridian passes through the Church of Saint Sulpice. The links to astrology and the occult have also been stressed. Claude Perrault, the Observatory's architect, was, with his brother Charles Perrault, author of fairy tales, credited with membership of a secret society; the basement was linked to the catacombs, supposedly used for various occult activities. At its southern end, the meridian is also associated with various myths, linking Mary Magdalene, the Holy Grail, the Cathars, the Templars, the Prieuré de Sion and the lost Merovingian dynasty, as well as to the mystery surrounding events at Rennes-le-Château and the artistic and literary output of figures such as Nicolas Poussin and Jules Verne. All of this has been given a new lease of life by the amazing popularity of Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code* (Brown

2003). Moreover, linked to this esoteric hotchpotch of fact and, mainly, fiction are various scientific theories, including that of geophysicist Alphonse Berger, who in 1912 pinpointed the centre of the continental surface of the planet on the Ile Dumet, off the Breton coast, leading to claims that this was indeed the 'navel' of the world and the lost Atlantis.

Whatever the merits of these different, more or less far-fetched theories, the fact remains that the development of global capitalism was accompanied by a significant reconfiguration of global space in a number of ways. The European colonial powers were placed firmly at the centre of the globe, as far as the peoples of their respective empires were concerned. Relations were henceforth concentrated along the single dominant axis tying the periphery to the centre (Amin 1989: 8–9). The only relation that now mattered was the one that tied the dominated colonised peoples to the dominant metropolitan power. Just as previous strengths in the colonised lands were no longer acknowledged, so too were blotted out of the memory external links that had previously existed in the form of trading relations, cultural exchanges and political alliances. The real cooperation, collaboration and partnerships of the past were written out of history, as in the case of the obscuring of trading and other links that existed between the Mediterranean countries and the East.[13] The achievements of indigenous peoples, their cultures and rights to the land were most often ignored or denied, as was, in some cases, the very existence of the indigenous peoples.

France's position at the centre was crystallised even more intensely in the dominant role allotted to its capital. The figure of Paris as a beacon, radiating light to the far-flung ends of the earth, was reinforced with the building of the Eiffel Tower, which, along with the Paris meridian, was the focus of the millennium celebrations. Yet again, the enduring strength of this figure, of the centre towering over its periphery, was demonstrated, as the symbol of the relationship that France still entertained with its colonies and former colonies elsewhere in the world.

There is another figure that was used to characterise the very particular character of the spatial relations operating between France and its key North African colony, Algeria, and the challenge to them through the anticolonial struggle. As far as the delineation of space is concerned, it is notable that the relationship between France and Algeria was defined both in terms of the clear binary divide characteristic of imperial relations, and through the denial of this differentiation. Algeria was not just a French territory, like other colonies. It had actually been incorporated into the territory of metropolitan France itself in 1881, thus reducing the Mediterranean Sea to nothing more than an internal waterway in the ideological discourse of supporters of *Algérie française*, who claimed that 'the Mediterranean flowed through France, just like the Seine flowed through Paris'. The division of Paris into left and right banks was thus paralleled by the division of France into the two banks or shores of the Mediterranean – the north bank and the south bank.

The incorporation of Algerian territory into metropolitan France was, in fact, the clearest concrete instance of assimilation in the history of French imperialism, which, as we shall see, whilst it was held out as an ever-receding goal for the colonised people themselves, in reality was only ever applied to territory. As Nicolas Bancel and

Pascal Blanchard have pointed out, 'assimilation applied to land, not to people' (Bancel and Blanchard 1997: 18).

The articulation of the spatial relation between France and Algeria contributes not a little to the specificity of Algeria amongst the French colonies, where the only parallel that comes anywhere close in British terms is the relation with Ireland, not only through its incorporation into the territorial realm of the United Kingdom, but also through the importance of the ownership of the land by the colonising power via extensive English landlordism. When Said criticised Conor Cruise O'Brien for his notion of Camus as someone who 'belonged to the frontier of Europe' (Said 1993: 209), he was right, given that there was, in reality, a clear divide between the colonised land of Algeria and the land of the colonising power. Nonetheless, in terms of what remained the dominant French discourse in Camus's time, the land of Algeria was perceived in a very real way as the frontier, the outpost of Europe on the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

Notes

1. Girardet also gives figures pointing to an increase of approximately one million hectares between 1871 and 1898 (Girardet 1993).
2. See the exhibition, 'Iraq, Navel of the World', Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, April 2003–March 2004.
3. See http://www.obspm.fr.
4. 'L'uniformité des poids et des mesures, demandée par le peuple dans tous les temps et tous les lieux, va enfin être établie dans toute l'étendue de la République française.' Agence temporaire des poids et mesures, 'Adresse aux artistes', 11 Floréal An III, published at http://smdsi.quartier-rural.org/histoire/11flor-3.htm.
5. The kilogram was originally defined as the mass of a cubic decimetre of water at maximum density.
6. It has been claimed that Méchain in fact made an error, which was subsequently covered up by both him and Delambre, leaving the metre actually 0.2 mm short (Alder 2002; *Guardian*, 27 August 2002), though this was hardly surprising given the variations that arose naturally.
7. See http://www.nmm.ac.uk.
8. See http://www.astrodatabank.com/DCH/70timechanges.htm.
9. Text published at http://webexhibits.org/calendars/calendar-french.html.
10. 'Le jour, de minuit à minuit, est divisé en dix parties; chaque partie en dix autres, ainsi de suite jusqu'à la plus petite portion commensurable de la durée' (Article XI).
11. Text also published at http://webexhibits.org/calendars/calendar-french.html.
12. The transition from sun time to mean time had already taken place in Geneva in 1780, Britain in 1792 and Berlin in 1810 – see http://www.astrodatabank.com/DCH/70timechanges.htm.
13. These links are vividly portrayed not only in the European Marco Polo's account of his travels, but also in the earlier writings of the Moroccan traveller Ibn Battutah, who arrived in India in 1333 (Dalrymple 1993: 253; Ibn Battutah 2002).

Chapter 1
French Discourses of Empire

The particular shape and characteristics of French postcolonial discourse today cannot be understood without an exploration of the specific historical legacy of French imperialism and colonialism and the discourses or ideologies through which these processes were articulated and rationalised. This chapter will highlight a number of key issues and contradictions, some of which still have a bearing on present difficulties.

The French Empire did not develop in a steady linear progression, but passed through a number of distinct stages in its history, or rather we should say their histories, in which each stage was marked by a clear setback, a defeat or loss, which, temporarily at least, put a brake on the process of expansion. One can distinguish, broadly speaking, three distinct phases: (1) from the early sixteenth century to the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815; (2) from 1830 (the conquest of Algiers) to 1870 (the fall of the Second Empire); and (3) the period of imperialist expansion under the Third Republic from 1875 to the culmination of the decolonisation process with Algerian independence in 1962. Each of these phases had its own specific features, in terms of the nature of the economic, political and military forces at play and the relations within which they operated. The different historical stages were also characterised by very different rationalisations of the whole imperial undertaking. Thus each phase was characterised by a specific set of discourses or ideologies, which had developed in tune with the times and historical conditions and which were used in the different stages to rationalise, or indeed to oppose, the process of colonial expansion (Girardet 1972; Ruscio 2002).

However, just as there was also an underlying continuum in the historical processes involved in the development of imperialism, in spite of the discontinuities, so too was there a strong element of continuity at the level of the ideas and discourses, in which earlier forms retained their power to influence and shape the new forms of later periods.

The First Phase of Modern French Imperialism
(Early Sixteenth Century to 1815)

The first stage coincided with similar attempts by other European powers at the beginning of the modern period to expand beyond their own borders into the so-called 'New World', Africa and the East, to bring back gold, silver, spices and other riches (Ferro 1996). The acquisition of natural resources, extracted minerals, agricultural produce and artefacts through various forms of trade and plunder, characterised by a greater or lesser use of force and deception, soon developed into new forms of agricultural production overseas in some of the territories, particularly in the Americas and the Caribbean. Colonial entrepreneurs of a new type thus took over from the older seafaring adventurers and privateers, with the intention of getting involved in the production process itself and developing it along new lines, through the establishment of vast plantations for the production of tropical or semi-tropical produce, often of new products that would become crucial for mass consumption back home, such as sugar, cotton and coffee. These new operations in the Americas and the Caribbean depended on the development of the slave trade into an operation of hitherto unheard-of scale and the transportation of slave labour to work the plantations. At the same time, colonial settlement by European settlers was taking place in what were sometimes known as 'virgin territories', and therefore seen as ripe opportunities for the enterprising settlers, willing to leave their homeland, often under the pressures of poverty and persecution, to start anew in a strange and foreign land. In this way, vast tracts of the North American continent were colonised by French settlers in what came to be known as 'New France'.

All of these endeavours were inspired by the sense of opportunities for making money or a better life, opportunities that were there for the taking or creating. There was no shortage of arguments for the validation of such enterprises. In the case of France, the conquests had been carried out in the name of the greater glory of the French king and the development of the earthly reign of Christendom. It was the French king François I who sent the Italian sailor Giovanni da Verrazano, to North America to attempt to find a route through to the Pacific in 1524/25. He also sent off the Breton sailor Jacques Cartier in 1534 to search for the north-west passage to Asia and explore the opportunities for riches in the Americas. Cartier is credited with 'discovering' much of Canada, claiming possession of the islands of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon in the name of the French Crown in 1535, for instance. However, attempts in 1555 to establish French settlements in Brazil, at Rio de Janeiro and elsewhere were strongly resisted by the Spanish and Portuguese, and it was not until 1605 with the founding of Port Royal in the territory of Acadia (present-day Nova Scotia), followed by the founding of Quebec in 1608 by Samuel de Champlain, with the support of the king, Henri IV, subsequently to become the capital of French Canada, or 'New France', that the French really developed a foothold. Further territory was claimed in what is now the southern United States. The former Jesuit, explorer Robert Cavelier de La Salle, famously named Louisiana after Louis XIV in 1682, and a colony was established there in 1699 by Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville,

born in 'New France', but serving as an officer in the French navy. Settlement began on the South American coast, in what is now French Guiana, from 1624 and colonies were founded on the Caribbean islands of Saint Kitts (1627), Martinique and Guadeloupe (1635), Saint Lucia (1650) and Saint-Domingue (1664). In Africa, the French set up trading posts along the Senegalese coast from 1624.

Yet, from the outset, there were certain features that distinguished the form that French overseas expansion was to take from that of other European powers, especially its arch-rival, England. Not least of these was the role that the state, the Church and the armed forces were to play in the colonial enterprise. Where the driving force of British expansion overseas had been the mercantile activity of its entrepreneurs, in France's case the interests of state and the extension of its political and military battles with other European powers on the European continent and especially with its island neighbour were to prove at least an equally potent factor and possibly reflected in part the relative lack of political influence of the merchant class in pre-Revolutionary France. It was Louis XIV's minister, Colbert, who founded the French East India Company (Compagnie des Indes Orientales) in 1664, which was to set up colonies on the Indian Ocean islands of the Ile de Bourbon (Réunion) (1664), Ile Royale (Ile de France, now Mauritius) (1718) and the Seychelles (1756), as well as on the Indian mainland, beginning with Chandernagore in Bengal in 1673. Further colonies were established at Pondicherry in 1674, Yanam in 1723, Mahe in 1725 and Karikal in 1739. Missionaries, such as Père Labat, played an active part in the acquisition of territory in Canada, Louisiana and the Caribbean, and the Church worked closely with the organs of state.

The role of the Church in the formulation of the Code Noir by Colbert for Louis XIV in 1685 (later renewed in a second version under Louis XV in 1724) was especially significant.[1] The Code set out the regulatory framework for the institution of slavery and the slave trade, down to the finest detail (Sala-Molins 1987). It claimed in the Preamble, that it was motivated by the need to maintain the authority of the king and the 'discipline of the Catholic Church', as well as the welfare of the slaves. The Code Noir proclaimed that all slaves should be baptised and instructed in the Catholic religion (Article 2) and that no other religion would be tolerated (Article 3). Indeed, the very first article orders the expulsion of all Jews from the island colonies. At the same time, it institutionalised the status of the slaves as the property of their masters.

The role of soldier-adventurers in India was also especially significant. Thus, while both British and French attempts to expand were driven forward by the need to establish new trading posts and settlements, the political imperative to score points against their rivals and defeat them in military battles assumed perhaps an even greater significance in the case of the French. The military exploits of La Bourdonnais, a French naval officer and administrator from Saint Malo, who operated in India and the Indian Ocean islands, rivalled those of the man he came to perceive as his enemy, Joseph François Dupleix. As Governor of Chandernagore from 1731, then Governor-General of India from 1742 until his recall to France in 1754, Dupleix vied with the British for control of India, particularly through a

policy of local alliances, political manoeuvring and intrigue and scored significant military success in the south.

In spite of their efforts, however, the French did not come out of these various overseas wars well. Acadia was lost to the English and became Nova Scotia, as a result of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, resulting in the traumatic displacement of more than 10,000 French-Acadians, the 'Cajuns', to Louisiana in 1755, still a vivid part of the folk memory, although many subsequently returned (Maillet et al. 1984). The French finally lost the battle with the British for the control of India and Canada, as a result of the Seven Years War, which ended in 1763, also the year of the death of Dupleix, who had ultimately been beaten at his own game by Robert Clive. This year also saw the cession of Louisiana to the Spanish, although it was briefly returned to France in 1800. In 1803, however, Napoleon sold Louisiana to the United States.

The loss of territory in the 'New France' of North America, as well as the loss of India were both felt keenly, though in different ways. There were attempts to find new ways for French colonialism to proceed. Yves Bénot, for instance, has argued that the Abbé Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique des deux Indes* was probably written to order, commissioned by the Choiseul ministry to assemble a body of knowledge in support of this policy (Raynal (1770)/1981). It is interesting that a section of this work, attributed to Diderot, argued notably for the civilising power of trade:

> It was there that, finally, seeing spread out before me these beautiful lands in which science and the arts now flourish, where the darkness of barbarism had for so long held sway, I asked myself: who dug these canals? Who drained these plains? Who founded these towns? Who brought together, clothed and civilised these peoples? Upon which all the enlightened men in their midst replied with one voice: it is trade, it is trade. (Raynal (1770)/1981: 15)

In the case of India, French nostalgia for a mostly mythical paradise lost was to become a long-standing feature of the relationship between France and India, down to the present day (see Chapter 8). Moreover, the subversive character of much of French activity in India, aimed at undermining British power, was to continue to mark a particular kind of French discourse, which presented France as the champion of the colonised underdog and still has its echoes today.

In the North American context, the linchpin was provided by the American Revolution, in which France naturally took the side of the American colonists against the British. Its own Revolution in 1789 was to have an even greater impact on what was left of France's colonial empire. First, it provided the impetus for the successful revolt of the black slaves in the 1790s in France's most profitable colony of the time, Saint-Domingue, which went on to become the independent state of Haiti. Secondly, it led directly to the takeover of power by the military leader Napoleon and the establishment of an empire in mainland France itself, which, apart from the Egyptian expeditions and other unfulfilled ambitions, was primarily preoccupied with extending its conquests to other European territories, unlike its British rival, which,

as an island power, necessarily focused on the domination of overseas territories, and, moreover, overseas territories that, with the exception of Ireland, were outside Europe. The importance of the Napoleonic system of government and the impact of the First Empire on the overseas colonies, in terms of historical events and processes, but also in terms of the colonial systems of governance and long-lasting ideological effects, have not received sufficient attention to date. We shall return to this question later, as well as to the ideological conflicts that arose during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods in respect of the colonies and, particularly, the institution of slavery – conflicts that were fought through in desperate struggles.

For the moment, suffice it to say that, by the end of the First Empire and Napoleonic period in 1815, the territory and trading posts that France had acquired all over the world had largely been lost, as a result of rivalry and wars, particularly with the British. Napoleon's defeat on the European continent led to a settlement, with the Treaties of Paris of 1814 and 1815, following on from the Congress of Vienna, in which a small number of its former colonies were restored to France, though this amounted to nothing more than the Caribbean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, Guiana, the Ile de Bourbon (Réunion) and trading posts in Senegal. Henceforth, these would be referred to as the 'old colonies'. All that remained of the French presence in India were the five trading posts, *'les comptoirs de l'Inde'*: Chandernagore in Bengal on the river Hooghly, about 30 km north of Calcutta, Pondicherry on the Coromandel coast, 160 km south of Chennai (Madras), Karikal, just south of Pondicherry, Yanam (Yanaoun), further north on the Andhra Pradesh coast, and Mahe, on the western Malabar coast (Sen 1971; Annasse 1975; Association Les Comptoirs de l'Inde/CHEAM 1994; Le Tréguilly and Morazé 1995; Vincent 1995; Weber 1996).

The Second Wave (1830–70)

The second wave began in 1830 with the key conquest of Algiers, leading to the take-over of much of the North African territory. The reasons for the invasion appear to have been fairly ad hoc, to provide something of a diversion for a monarchy in trouble, though a short-term pretext was provided when the Dey of Algiers struck the French consul with a fly-whisk and a longer-term one by the wish to curtail the activities of pirates operating out of Algiers.

Moreover, the brief interlude of the Second Republic (1848–1852) brought the political dimension of the debates once more to the fore, culminating in the second abolition of slavery in 1848, with Victor Schœlcher as Under-Secretary for Colonies, and the institution of universal manhood suffrage in the colonies. These measures, which included representation in the national assemblies of metropolitan France for the colonies, meant that the 'old colonies' had been brought into the logic of a process of assimilation, although representation of the colonies did not necessarily mean representation of the colonised for many years to come.[2] In any event, there were setbacks in the actual implementation of these measures, as a result of the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon and the establishment of the Second Empire.

This led to a resurgence of militaristic colonial ambitions, leading to some further territorial gains, with Cochin China added to the list of conquests. It also led to some notable failures, such as the ill-fated attempt to install a puppet regime in Mexico (1861–67). Under the Second Empire, there was also a reversal of policy on some issues relating to colonialism and modifications to the accompanying discourse. Some of the tensions between the two strands of colonial policy, which were later to develop into the opposition of 'assimilation' and 'association', have their roots in this period, although in reality it was never a case of either/or, but a recourse to different approaches depending on the particular circumstances.

The new colonial conquests, particularly those in North Africa, opened up the way for new approaches to the administration of these peoples and territories. If there were attempts at the beginning to use traditional structures in a more indirect form of control, these pragmatic arrangements were replaced by the system put into place in 1845, under the Governor, Marshal Bugeaud. The system set up a threefold division of the territory into civil, mixed and military authorities. A key element was the 'Arab bureaux', which, under the aegis of the army, devolved a whole slice of administration and tax collection to local functionaries of one type or another. These were abandoned in 1856, largely because of problems of corruption, and the civil authority took over (Girardet 1993). Military authority and influence remained a key element in the governance of Algeria, however. Louis-Napoleon himself harboured ambitions to rule Algeria as an Arab kingdom, in which the Arabs would have the right to their own autonomous territory, from which European settlers would be excluded. In this scenario, he would be Emperor of the Arabs, as well as of the French. These proposals were strongly opposed by the colonial settlers and very little came of the emperor's attempts to cast himself in the role of 'friend of the Arabs' (Spillmann 1981). In any event, the measures that were taken were soon to be overturned by the Third Republic, which took up the policy of assimilation with enthusiastic vigour (Girardet 1993) and implemented measures to give the old colonies representation in France, as well as through local government, though not without retaining their status as colonies.

The Third Phase (1875–1962)

The real expansion took place much later in the nineteenth century, from the 1870s onward, when Britain and France practically carved up Africa between them in a division of spoils sanctioned by the Berlin Conference of 1885. France also increased its hold over Indochina, although it never recovered its earlier influence in India or other parts of the globe. This third stage, which lasted until the decolonisation of the post-war period and early 1960s, marks the real heyday of the French Empire (Andrew and Kanya-Forstner 1981). By 1914, there were sixty million people under French imperial control and over ten million square miles of territory. There were further gains at the end of the First World War, when the French gained League of Nations mandates over the former Turkish territories of Syria and Lebanon, and also acquired African territory, previously controlled by the Germans, in Togo and Cameroon.

The arguments and debates about the empire were not restricted to the realm of politics (Chafer and Sackur 2001). During the course of the nineteenth century, with the development of the modern nation-state and modern forms of French nationalism, the cultural realm became increasingly important, as the notion of the superiority of French culture and civilisation became more and more widespread. Economic arguments also had their part to play. In particular, following the loss of the first overseas territories, one of the main arguments against any further colonial adventures had been their ruinous cost (Spillmann 1981). Voltaire himself had earlier used this argument in *Candide*, bemoaning the expense of the war over possession of Acadia, 'a few acres of snow', which exceeded what all of Canada was worth, though this has often been misquoted (Voltaire (1759)/2003). Moreover, after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine in 1870, the anticolonial camp found new force in the case for concentrating resources on building up the home front, against their powerful enemy across the Rhine. However, the economic arguments that were to prevail were those put forward, not against, but in support of the necessity of colonial expansion to provide a safety valve for the economy, as the Third Republic minister Jules Ferry was to put it, most notably in his speech to the Chambre des députés of 28 March 1884. Colonial policy was the daughter of industrial policy, he said. France needed colonies to provide new and expanding markets, as well as to act as a source of cheap raw materials and labour power.[3] Paul Leroy-Beaulieu also made the economic case for colonial expansion, as in his book *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (Leroy-Beaulieu 1874). He saw the colonies as an outlet for surplus population, products and capital. Léon Gambetta, amongst others, also argued that colonial expansion could be seen as compensation for the loss of Alsace-Lorraine (Ager 1996).

These were some of the arguments with which opponents and supporters of the expansion of empire carried out the debates. Once the empire had established itself with a firm foothold in North and Equatorial Africa and in Indochina, in addition to the outposts of the Caribbean and the islands of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the dominant discourse became more political. After all, the heyday of the French Empire coincided with the entrenchment of the Republic in mainland France, in the form of the Third Republic, which still remains the longest-lasting Republic that France has yet seen. If the earlier explorers, priests, merchant- and soldier-adventurers had carried out their conquests to the greater glory of God and King, the more modern radicals and Republicans of this period raised the French flag all over the globe to the greater glory of the Republic.

The common premise underlying all the discourses of empire was a fundamental redefinition of the relations between the countries involved, in which the realities of the precolonial past were obfuscated. Thus, all previous achievements of the colonised countries were overlooked, played down or distorted. Economic development, scientific discoveries, mastery of technology, cultural diversity, political and military might – all disappear from accounts of these countries' histories to date. They were to appear henceforth as backward outposts, on the fringes of the new historical narrative of the planet's development.

The colonising power was presented as marking a new stage in the development of the countries concerned. As such, it was the harbinger of technological, economic, political and cultural progress, the agent of change for the salvation of the peoples concerned, who had previously been wallowing in their backwardness and obscurantist ways. Hope lay only through the advent of modernism, and the imperial powers had a monopoly on modernity. Henceforth the only value would be that added through imports. The whole enterprise was of course couched in high-sounding rhetoric. If the British forte was to present itself at the forefront of economic and technological development, with the construction of railways as its major trump card, it did not hesitate also to promote its own particular brand of paternalistic moralism. The French, on the other hand, drew on their own characteristic source of political modernity, with the trumpeting of the values of the Revolution and the Republic, the universalism of which suited the enterprise very nicely.

French colonial discourse was not a monolithic entity, but was characterised by different strands and tendencies (Roberts 1963), such as the 'associationism' linked to Lyautey and strongest in the protectorates, like Tunisia (established in 1881) and Morocco (established in 1911), where the French used existing administrative structures to rule indirectly. This 'associationism' differentiated itself from the dominant tendency proclaiming the virtues of 'assimilation', while the latter enjoyed an almost hegemonic status in the full colonies, at least in theory. As Gambetta said in a speech at the Palais-Bourbon on 10 February 1878, 'the principle which has primacy in all our work, which should rule our decisions and govern all our thinking, is the principle of assimilation' (Gambetta 1883: 102).

It was in the name of the Republic that the French colonialists were bringing the universal values of the Enlightenment to the colonised peoples they ruled. The Rights of Man were trumpeted as universally applicable, as were the Republican principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. There is perhaps no better example of the fervour with which the doctrine of assimilation was promoted than the speech made by Gambetta at a banquet commemorating the abolition of slavery, held on 5 May 1881, in the presence of Victor Schœlcher, in which he claimed that 'France will never be big enough nor its population sufficient'. Any increase in the number of its citizens was a way of increasing the grandeur of France. The abolition of slavery itself was seen in this light: 'The fact that Frenchmen were created on this day, which we now commemorate, is sufficient cause for its memory to be a supreme cause for rejoicing and reparation.' (Gambetta 1910: 166). He proposed a toast to the '*Français d'outre-mer*':

> without distinction of colour, class or caste; the Declaration of the Rights of Man – and this is our Gospel – did not distinguish between people according to the colour or the rank, where they have been placed by fate on the social ladder. This is what gave it its solemn, sovereign character, even as it extended the scope of our national regeneration: instead of saying 'the rights of the Frenchman and the citizen', it said 'the rights of man and the citizen', thereby signifying that whoever should claim membership of the human family, by

dint of his organic body and conformity as part of the closely linked series of beings, had, by right of birth and similarity, to be admitted to participation in human freedom and dignity. (Gambetta 1910: 166)

Indeed, he also saluted the 'overseas French' for their contribution to ensuring the victory of the Republic, adding to the number of Republican supporters in the National Assembly (Gambetta 1910: 167). He then ended by encouraging them to demand ever more 'assimilation':

> ever closer assimilation to the mother country, assimilation which will not much longer be denied to you … You are in possession of the same freedoms as France, you may perhaps think that they are not sufficiently complete, I believe that, for the moment, they are enough to be able to prepare the rest, and they will shortly receive their necessary complement.
>
> The assimilation that you demanded, you have already obtained most of what you asked for; one more effort, one more vote, one more representation, and I am sure that between France overseas and mainland France there will no longer be any disparity: there will only be one France, the true, the only France, and there will only be one flag, the one to which I raise my glass, gentlemen, the national flag. (Gambetta 1910: 168)

We shall see that everyone in the Republican camp was not in fact in agreement that the Rights of Man covered the colonised; for some, there were limits to how far their universality could be stretched. Moreover, we shall see that the division of France into two Frances did not disappear with the triumph of the Third Republic, but would re-emerge through the following years. This did not mean, however, that there were no differences between the British and French brands of empire. In a speech to the Chambre des députés the following year, 18 July 1882, Gambetta made the case for cooperation with Britain with regard to Egypt, in spite of (or because of) the rivalry that existed between the two powers and, in particular, their different conceptions of the nation and the colonies:

> remember that the English have the habit of differentiating between peoples. On the one hand, there are those peoples, which they consider to be nations of a race similar to their own and able to benefit from the institutions of free England; Australia and Canada are countries where there really is a people with successive generations and social strata, with its own traditions, its own language and its already constituted aptitudes. To these, the English give institutions, which gradually lead to the emancipation of these races and make of them, as it were, the younger sisters of England. But there are other races, it would appear, which, in the eyes of England, have always had the characteristic of being dominated, of living under the crack of the whip, and which are only capable of becoming a people, provided that they are not exposed to all types of demands and pressures coming from outside. (Gambetta 1910: 268)

For the French, on the other hand, there was only one nation; it was this nation that had the right to act in Egypt, to maintain European influence and keep it away from 'Muslim fanaticism and the chimera of revolution' (Gambetta 1910: 272).

As a further, concrete illustration of the difference between the approaches of the French and the British, the gateway still stands that used to separate the French colony of Chandernagore in Bengal from British India; it still bears the motto of the French Republic: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*. It is worth comparing this with the inscription carved by Lutyens on the gateway of the Secretariats in New Delhi (quoted in Dalrymple 1993: 83):

> Liberty will not descend to a people;
> A people must raise themselves to liberty;
> It is a blessing which must be earned
> Before it can be enjoyed.

The contrast between the two discourses is neatly illustrated. However, did this then mean that the French colonies represented a Republican's vision of paradise on earth for the colonised peoples?

The French Republican Discourse of Empire

The reality existed in what was more akin to a schizophrenic relationship to the dominant colonial discourse. For, if all could aspire to be equal citizens of the Republic, with full political rights, in practice most remained colonial subjects, with only duties and few, if any, rights (Suret-Canale 2001). Moreover, this was not just a contradiction between discourse and reality; the contradiction was also integral to the discourse itself, which maintained the same essential dualism, that had characterised earlier differentiations between Christians and heathen, freemen and chattel slaves, whites and blacks, Europeans and 'natives', civilisation and barbary. Indeed, these forms of the binary divide did not go away; they were subsumed beneath new layers of discourse.

Thus, the distinction between citizen and subject did not go unacknowledged in the heyday of empire; in fact, it was clearly spelled out, as fundamental to the constitutional theory of the Third Republic. As Etienne Balibar has pointed out (Balibar 1992), a clear distinction was made between French citizens and those who were not members of the national collective, whether as foreigners residing on French soil or as 'natives' in the colonies and protectorates. Not only were the latter defined as subject to the power of the French state, but this power was defined as external to them, since they were not part of the collective body that constituted its sovereignty.[4] Moreover, this distinction was paralleled by a clear divide between the law as such, *la Loi*, over which all citizens had the right to exercise control through their representative bodies, and legislative authority outside the law, *le pouvoir réglementaire*, which concerned the day-to-day management of the state's function of maintaining public order, as well as the administration of the colonies. While these

categories were, and still are, also applicable to metropolitan France, the latter played a particularly important role in the administration of the colonies.[5] Indeed, as Jean Suret-Canale has pointed out, the constitutional position of the colonies was, under the Third Republic and until 1946, largely what it had been under the Second Empire, since the 'Senatus-Consulte' of 3 May 1854, which decreed that the colonies should be governed by imperial decree until further legislation, never forthcoming, was passed (Suret-Canale 2001).

The reality of the situation of the colonial 'subject' was thus far removed from what appeared to be the premises of the discourse of assimilation. However, the discourse of assimilation should also not be confused with a belief in the fundamental equality of races and peoples. Indeed, it will become clear that even the most vociferous proponents of assimilation sometimes had strongly held convictions based on the premise of the inequality of races. We should note here that Jules Ferry and Léon Blum have both been cited by Jean-Marie Le Pen in support of his own view of the inequality of the races (Taguieff 1997).

There are, thus, a number of misapprehensions with regard to the doctrine of assimilation. Basically, it was, first and foremost, a policy option for administering the colonised peoples, not a philosophical or political theory of colonialism. This meant, on the one hand, that it could coexist as part of a world view based on diverse assumptions regarding the scope of universalism or the extent of the applicability of equality and human rights. Moreover, in spite of the fact that assimilationism formed an important strand of colonial doctrine, it was neither the only strand, nor did it, in fact, correspond that often to actual practice.

More representative of this reality was the 'Code de l'indigénat', developed in Algeria in 1881 and then extended elsewhere, which made the 'natives' subject to summary administrative justice for a whole range of offences, including failure to show respect to the representatives of French authority (Suret-Canale 2001). A clear illustration of the continuity of the forms governing colonial relations, this was a latter-day version of the Code Noir.

Very few of the colonised subjects could actually attain the rank of citizen, which was limited to a small elite who had successfully negotiated the successive hurdles of the French education system and passed the assimilation test. In Algeria, which was not even considered a colony but an integral part of France,[6] the Arab or Berber population could only acquire full citizenship rights if they renounced the Muslim *statut personnel*, which in effect meant giving up their religion.[7] Even when the limited right to vote was conceded after the Second World War in a dual college system, one European vote was made the equivalent of eight Algerian votes. As Benjamin Stora (1992: 19), among others, has pointed out, the Republican principle of equality, encapsulated in the notion of 'one man, one vote', was not respected.

Yet, even in the case of those who appeared to have sincerely held beliefs in an assimilationist universalism based on equality of rights, the discourse showed clear symptoms of schizophrenia. This comes out through two contradictions, which do not have merely historical interest, but are at the root of some of the most contentious ideological debates of our own time.

The first is the contradiction between the universalist discourse and its use by the particular nation-state of France, together with its embeddedness in a national political culture, with a specific national language. Indeed, Antoine de Rivarol, in his *Discours sur l'universalité de la langue française* of 1784, had already made it clear that the universality of the French language was based on very particular, national characteristics, such as its political institutions, its climate, the particular characteristics of its people and, above all, its image in the world.[8]

This contradiction came out very clearly in debates around assimilation. Gambetta, one of the principal advocates of colonial assimilation, as we have seen, could insist, at the same time, when talking about assimilation, on the absolute 'Frenchness' of the task at hand (*'nous venons faire ici une œuvre absolument française'* (Gambetta 1883: 102).

The fortunes of the reputation of the seventeenth-century French philosopher, Descartes, his ratings and image over the last four hundred years, could serve as a concrete illustration of the ambiguity at the heart of the universalist world view. On the one hand, Descartes has come to symbolise the French nation itself; thus André Glucksmann could publish his book on the philosopher under the title, *Descartes, c'est la France* (1987). Yet, in 1765, the Academicians were already vying with each other to prove that Descartes did not belong to France alone, but was the gift of France to the universe. Little by little, a view of Descartes took shape from the end of the eighteenth century as the real founder of modern freedom, with his doctrine of radical doubt and fundamental reliance on the sole power of human reason. As such, he became the bogeyman of the anti-Republican and ultra-Catholic Right, one of the key symbols of the *franco-français* struggles and synonymous with France, whether as an idealised figure or as the target of abuse. While Victor Cousin could eulogise the profound Frenchness of Cartesianism as 'a fruit of the soil, a profoundly and exclusively French œuvre in both its form and content' (quoted in *Le Monde des livres*, 29 March 1996: VI), its repudiation by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, both by the radical Right for its subversive undermining of authority and by some parts of the revolutionary Left for a petty preoccupation with order and abstraction, did little to detract from its incarnation as the symbol of French universalism. In 1946, the year in which Sartre was to rehabilitate Descartes as the apostle of existential freedom in his anthology of his texts (Sartre 1946a), Maurice Thorez was to portray him, in the name of the French Communist Party, as one of the factors inextricably linked to Frenchness and, furthermore, a pioneer of socialism and Marxism![9]

The second characteristic feature of the ambiguity of the Republican discourse was the fact that the subsequent national liberation struggles tended to be articulated in terms of the same modernist discourse as that used by the colonial oppressor. Imperialism couched in the discourse of modernity produced its own ideological, if not political, gravediggers. The first generation of leaders of the newly independent states were, indeed, to be found amongst the small elite who had been thoroughly schooled in the ideas of the French Enlightenment and steeped in the discourse of the French Republic. It is thus no surprise that the development of what has come

to be known as *La Francophonie* built on this legacy, though not in a straightforward, linear fashion.

The remainder of this chapter will develop further a general overview of the way in which French Republican discourse overlaid the realities of empire. In particular, some of the following questions will be addressed: how far this discourse corresponded to earlier discourses of the Revolutionary period; whether any of the contradictions already apparent at the time of the Revolution were resolved, or apparently resolved, by the time of Third Republic imperialist expansion; and what the new elements were that developed over time and specifically into the postcolonial period.

Revolution, Republic and Nation

The key notions underpinning the French Republic derive, of course, from the ideas that were developed in theoretical form during the prologue to the French Revolution and then concretised and given practical content during the course of that revolution.

At the heart of the Republican world view is the notion of national sovereignty, the nation as the sole source of the legitimacy of political power. Also known as sovereignty of the people, *souveraineté populaire*, this is a fundamental principle of the democratic world view, that political power is only legitimate when it derives from the people and is used for the people's benefit. It is a notion in which the people and the nation are one and the same. Yet how are they defined? How is it determined who constitutes the nation/people – who is to be included and who excluded? These issues had already been debated by the Enlightenment philosophers, reflecting on the principles and practices of antiquity. Rousseau discussed the Greek practices of exclusion and even the practice of killing any foreigner found in the political assemblies of the people, deemed necessary to ensure that the will of the people could be accurately expressed (Rousseau 1762).

The rise of nationalism and the nation-state began with the growth of capitalism at the beginning of the modern period and reached its apogee in the course of the nineteenth century, as far as Europe is concerned. There was no one model of the nation-state. The French Revolution instituted a new model of the nation, alongside an exclusivist, ethnically defined one, with its roots in the *Ancien Régime.* For all the similarities in basic ideology, the new American nation was profoundly different in character from the modernist conception that came to the fore in France. Britain had its own particular, synthetic model. Germany's again would be different, hovering between an attraction on the part of some progressive nationalists to the French Republic, but ultimately surrendering to the siren call of romantic ties to the blood of the race and an almost ethnic symbiosis with the soil, forests and rivers of the territory. In the definition of German nationality, the ties of blood were the sole criterion; only ethnic Germans, wherever their place of birth, were eligible for German nationality. This notion has only recently been challenged (*Le Monde*, 16 October 1998).

The striking new characteristic of the French conception of the nation and the people that developed at the time of the Revolution as the practical expression of the

Enlightenment vision of thinkers like Rousseau was its representation as a political union. In its pure Republican essence, the nation was conceived as the union of citizens. In other words, the nation was not the sum total of the individuals living on a particular territory and linked by historical, family, racial or other ethnic ties. Family ties, leading to birthrights, were seen as a particular source of inequality by Enlightenment thinkers.[10] The nation was rather a political body, in which citizens with the same political rights and duties coexisted in absolute equality. This equality could only be conceived by the exclusion of real inequalities and differences from this public, political domain into a separate private domain. It was to the latter that the real differences between individuals were relegated, including differences based on family origins, economic disparities, geographical, cultural, religious and other factors. This implied a high level of abstraction, particularly with regard to the concept of the citizen, who existed only in his political capacity, in respect of his political rights and duties.

The French Republic does not allow for difference amongst its citizens. This abhorrence of difference is still a guiding principle of political debates in France today. One recent example was the controversy that arose in the spring of 1999 surrounding the revision of Article 3 of the Constitution to specify that there should be equality of men and women in the area of political representation (*'la loi favorise l'égal accès des femmes et des hommes aux mandats électoraux et aux fonctions électives*) and the introduction into Article 4 of financial penalties for those parties that did not make efforts to achieve this. There was serious opposition to this, not so much by diehard defenders of male prerogatives, but by some stalwart Republicans, on the grounds that it introduced divisions into the sovereign people.[11]

The question of gender difference and its relationship to Republicanism has been a problematic one from the beginning. Other manifestations of particularity and difference have been more straightforward. Thus, the irrelevance of kinship and territorial links to the Republican concept of the nation meant that, in theory, it was open to all. Indeed, in the early days of the French Revolution, it was possible for 'foreigners', such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine, to become citizens of the French Republic. This open, assimilationist principle was to remain a dominant theme of the Republican discourse of nationhood to this day, although, as we shall see, exclusion is the inevitable counterpart of assimilation. The one cannot exist without the other.

In any event, the Republican view implied rather more than opening the doors of the French nation-state to all comers. Of even wider significance was the universalism upon which the whole Enlightenment discourse of the Republic and the nation had been founded. This meant essentially that the principles of the French Revolution were not applicable solely to the French. Liberty, equality and fraternity were proclaimed as the birthright of the whole human race and the Declaration of the Rights of Man was presented as a universal charter for all humankind. The differences that existed between real human individuals had no political significance.

Moreover, the notion of homogeneity was central to this concept of the nation, constituted by the union of citizens. The nation as unity of the people represented

not a consensus or majority view, resulting from the working out of the differences between individuals and interest groups, but was the expression of the will of the whole people, the 'general will' in Rousseau's terms (Rousseau 1762). At its most extreme, this view of the nation had, as its corollary, the position that the nation, as representative of the general will, could speak only with one voice, implying the need for unanimity as an outcome of all political debate by the representatives of the nation. Difference per se was excluded from the realm of a politics that was diametrically opposed to other theories of politics based on conflict and struggle between individuals, groups or classes. Quite how the single will of the nation was to emerge in unanimity was always problematic, and has, at various moments in the history of the French Republic, led to faith in what could almost be characterised as a form of mystical vision, such as that expressed by General de Gaulle in his famous speech at Bayeux in June 1946. Often this type of thinking has culminated in a single charismatic figure, such as de Gaulle himself, being endowed with the capacity to represent the whole nation.

Indeed, much of the current constitution is based on ideas such as these, which were at the root of the Gaullian vision. The role of the head of the French state was crucially defined by his role in representing the unity and will of the whole nation. Even the deputies of the National Assembly are each considered to be representatives of the whole nation, rather than of their particular constituencies; their mandate is a national one and involves no responsibility to their particular constituents.[12]

In practice, however, the unanimity required by this theory of the nation could rarely, if ever, be applied concretely and remained on the level of abstraction. The modern French Fifth Republic is itself a hybrid: de Gaulle's principles, which gave primacy to national unity, had to give way to accommodate the party-political conflicts inherent in the parliamentary aspects of the system. Moreover, the Republican conception of the nation, and particularly its inevitable embodiment in a strong, central state, was contested even in its origins by more liberal strains of Enlightenment thinking. These stressed the paramount importance of individual freedom over the national interest and saw the state as a necessary evil, whose power needed to be contained through a system of controls, as in Montesquieu's theory of the separation of powers, set out in *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), where one power checks another power.[13]

In spite of these reservations, however, the basic elements of the Republican conception of the nation remain enshrined in the constitution. It still constitutes one essential element of the theoretical underpinning of the French Republic, even if it has always been contested by actual political practice.

Those looking for theoretical backing for a different view of the nation can, of course, refer to a much earlier political tradition, whose antecedents pre-date the Revolution. In *Ancien Régime* thinking, the nation was loosely defined in relation to the two terms of kinship and territory. This conception of the nation was built on local and regional identities, which do not stand in opposition to the national identity but are rather constitutive of it, providing the geographical and cultural heritage in which ancestral links to a particular piece of land are central. In other words, one's Frenchness is mediated through one's regional identity; one needs to be a Gascon or

a Breton and so on before one can be French. Thus, the French national community evolved over time along with the consolidation of a national, central power, which was prepared to go to war and fight to defend certain perceived 'national' interests. This French nation was defined as much by those it excluded, as by those who were included, unlike the Revolutionary concept, in which the nation was posited as inclusive and assimilationist, open to all potential political citizens of the Republic.

The importance of this earlier conception of the nation is not to be underestimated and, certainly, the theorists of the counter-revolution, such as Joseph de Maistre, with his *Considérations sur la France* (1797), *Du Pape* (1819) and *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* (1821), sought to develop the exclusivist concept of the nation in the post-Revolutionary period. The conflict between the modernist notion of the nation and the traditionalist one of ethnic and territorial ties, linked to the ideology of blood and soil, was to continue throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The importance of these two linked notions of blood and soil came increasingly to the fore, with the development of notions of racial purity and the importance of the bloodline and kinship ties on the one hand, as in Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853–55), and long-established, ancestral roots in a given territory on the other. This latter aspect was developed in the specific brand of nationalism promoted by Maurice Barrès, with its emphasis on the importance of *enracinement*, notably his *Les Déracinés* (1897). According to this version of nationhood, newcomers and itinerants were permanently excluded from the national community. The prime focus, however, was the exclusion of the Jews, as these ideas developed into a xenophobic anti-Semitism throughout the nineteenth century, culminating in the polarisation arising from the Dreyfus Affair. With the development of the empire, the same ideological tendencies developed into a chauvinistic racism, directed against the colonised peoples.

Some people have characterised the two types of nationalism, set out above, as either 'maternal' or 'paternal'. Paradoxically, Jean-Louis Lévy, in his essay on Dreyfus, attributes the maternal variety to Dreyfus himself, while claiming that most French Jews subscribed to the paternal variety, similar to that of the young Bonaparte, and one that looked to the future, to the abstract principles of the Revolution, rather than the visceral attachment to a nationalism with its roots in tradition and the past, characteristic of the maternal variety.[14]

The dichotomy between the two conceptions of nationhood was, of course, just one aspect of a broader conflict that counterpoised the Republican and the anti-Republican forces throughout the nineteenth century, with Vercingetorix and Clovis as the respective champions of the opposing camps.[15] Yet, just as this conflict was not a simple bipolar opposition, but was punctuated by a series of compromises and attempts at creating hybrid forms of the political system, so also the question of nationhood should be viewed in all its complexity. There are internal issues and contradictions to be explored within the different conceptions, as well as changes and developments that were to take place under the impact of historical circumstances. Our concern here is with the problems associated with the modernist, political conception of the nation, associated with the Republican viewpoint.

The Fault-lines of the Revolutionary Principles

The universalism of the first Republican principles was always an ideological construct, with limited real practical application. For all the noble aspirations of inclusiveness and openness, the new French Republican model of the nation was flawed from the start. The pure, abstract notion of the nation as the union of the citizens was very soon tainted by such particularist and historically contingent considerations as the association with a specific language, a specific territory, specific national traditions and culture.[16] Indeed, Balibar has gone further to suggest that these flaws are not unique to the French model, but that all historical forms of citizenship have been based on the principle of exclusion – of women, of slaves or, indeed, of partly 'naturalised' foreigners, since the political community is constituted as a state and also linked to a society (Balibar 1992: 113). Thus, the first-flush universalist idealism of the early Revolutionaries soon gave way to real restrictions. Indeed, some were already present from the outset in the flawed conception of the universal Rights of Man, which limited these political rights to the male half of the human species.

This should not be construed as a retrospective critique in the light of later feminist concerns. No sooner had the Declaration of the Rights of Man been published than the challenge to its pseudo-universalist scope was mounted with the publication in 1791 of Olympe de Gouges's *Rights of Women*. The movement to extend political rights to women did not, of course, succeed; indeed, it was ruthlessly repressed (Godineau 1988). Olympe de Gouges was sent to the guillotine. Théroïgne de Méricourt's campaign for women to have their voice in the Revolution ended with her public humiliation and descent into madness.

The universality of political rights also came under challenge by the introduction of a property-based division of the citizen body into the two categories of active and passive citizens, the former enjoying full political rights as well as duties, the latter burdened only with duties.

In both these cases, the restrictions on the universalist principle were dictated not by logical flaws within the principle itself, which had served as a powerful slogan to mobilise the forces of the whole people as part of the Revolutionary struggle. It was rather the clash between the ideological principle and the reality of the historical balance of class forces and gender groups within the economy and society of the time. In both cases, alternative solutions that maintained the universalist principle were put forward by the movement for women's rights, on the one hand, and the egalitarian wings of the Revolutionary movement, on the other, though not all members of these two movements necessarily supported the other's case. Thus, the limitations referred to may be seen as failures to apply the principle in a given historical context, rather than as inherent flaws in the principle itself. In both cases, the challenges to the actual exclusions were doomed to repression and failure. This was not so with the most significant challenge to the French Revolutionary state, which took place not in mainland France itself, but in her richest colony of the time, Saint-Domingue (see Chapter 2).

The obfuscation in the name of universalist principles of the particular genesis of the Revolution and the Republic was convincing only if confined to the realm of the abstract ideal. In reality, the Revolution and the Republic came into being under the ideological

banner of universalism but in the specific local context of the French nation-state. This led inevitably to a sometimes dangerous conflation of the two, with the contingent circumstances of the birth of the modern universalist Republic in France seen as the justification for the imposition by France of this model on other peoples, from the Napoleonic conquests through to the expansion of empire under the flag of the Third Republic. Most seriously, the failure to recognise openly the actual particularism of their own French nation could lead to a refusal to acknowledge the particular claims of other peoples to national status. The Rights of Man did not extend to the Rights of Nations.

We shall have occasion to return to this key contradiction which is at the heart of one of the main French discourses of empire and which has left a continuing legacy of ideological ambivalence for the contemporary, 'postcolonial' world. Reality, however, always has a tendency to reassert its supremacy over ideology and discourse throughout the course of history. In the face of the abstract, universalist, all-inclusive political concept of the Republican nation, the concrete issue of the unity and defence of the particular national territory of France against attack by the enemies of the Revolution was soon one to be reckoned with. The imposition of the particular French language as the national language was similarly dictated by the practical need to unify a people speaking a number of different local and regional languages and dialects (Rickard 1989; Battye and Hintze 1992). Thus, the abstract political nation was never actually experienced in its pure, ideal form, but was linked from the outset with a really existing, concrete territorial and linguistic community.

Therefore, it was perhaps inevitable that the Republican model of nationhood would in reality be influenced by elements of the exclusionist model based on territory and kinship. This interaction and partial fusion were to become accentuated at the end of the nineteenth century with the establishment of the Third Republic, which took place formally in 1875.

The Evolution and Fusion of the Main Strands of Nineteenth-century Nationalism

The Third Republic adopted as its official ideology the political, inclusive model of the nation as the union of its citizens and reinforced the differentiation between the public domain of political life and public service, on the one hand, and the private domain of individual and family life, on the other. At the same time, it developed a more specifically French orientation, in which the self-definition of the French nation increasingly depended on the differences that were articulated in respect of other non-French nations. Thus it was that territorial, ethnic and cultural factors came to assume increasing importance in the nation's view of itself.

In no small measure, these developments were due to the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, culminating in the loss of Alsace-Lorraine and the continuing perception of the German neighbour as the most menacing threat to the French nation, as the significant Other in opposition to which French nationhood was defined.

Even so, the terms of the new self-identity retained a decidedly Republican form, in which the key positive concept of national unity was paramount. What was new

was the extension of this notion beyond the strictly political domain to encompass cultural elements in the formation of a new notion of national identity. This national identity assumed the existence of a homogeneous national culture, which the establishment of compulsory, free and secular public schooling by the National Education Minister Jules Ferry in 1881 was set to make a reality. The French language had been the official judicial and administrative language since the *Ordonnances de Villers-Cotteret* of 1539 and there had been significant efforts during the Revolution, most notably by Barrère and the Abbé Grégoire, to make French the truly national language of the Republic, culminating in the decrees of 1793 concerning the compulsory use of French in schools and then the decree of 20 July 1794 forbidding the use of other languages in all written documents. However, the reality had been somewhat different for the bulk of the population, who still spoke their own regional language or dialect at the beginning of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The public schooling system was to change this decisively, by enforcing the use of the standard French language in all its schools and ruthlessly punishing all miscreants who continued to speak in other tongues while on school premises.

Thus, there was a concerted attempt to eliminate all regional linguistic and cultural difference through the uniformity imposed by the education system. No longer was it enough to banish such difference to the private domain; language and culture were incorporated into the public domain and, as such, politicised. This was achieved by the full-scale integration into the public domain of an education system that had hitherto been largely left as the preserve of the family, the Church and its orders. Although parts of the system had been conceived as public institutions in the service of the state from their origins – such as the Napoleonic *lycées* created for the training of an elite civil and military service – the creation of a mass-level, public service was unprecedented.

Not only was the organisation of the system, including the curriculum, directly controlled by the central state, but the teachers were also made state employees, with the same status as other *fonctionnaires*, or civil servants. The function and purpose of schooling were defined explicitly, not in terms of individual fulfilment but as the preparation of the future citizens for useful public service to the Republic. The whole curriculum, and particularly the *instruction civique* classes, was geared to inculcating the values of citizenship based on equality of rights and duties, as well as to propagating the newly homogeneous national culture.

The abstract political equality of all citizens now became transformed into cultural uniformity, and thus the main vehicle for the assimilation of all future citizens into the homogeneous national body. At its most messianic, the system sought to propagate the ideals of a meritocracy, in which real social, economic and financial inequality could be left behind at the school gate, in which all pupils would be treated the same in their identical school overalls, in which they would all imbibe the same version of the nation's history, the same national cultural heritage of great authors and their works, the same set of intellectual, moral and political values.

The real limitations to this uniform utopia probably do not need to be dwelt on at length, at least as far as metropolitan France was concerned. Not least, the

continued existence of a parallel and almost wholly religious system of private schooling ensured that some French children continued to receive a very different account of the French national heritage, through the mainly Catholic private schools. Nor can it be said that the public school system was successful in achieving real social equality, since so many extra-curricular factors were involved. Its record on cultural assimilation was rather more impressive, particularly in respect of children of non-French origin, whose parents had come to settle in France from countries such as Italy and Poland, and who became transformed into fully fledged French citizens within the space of a generation.

It is within the context of the huge expansion of the French Empire that these developments take on their full significance, for the purpose of the argument that is being developed here. As Balibar has pointed out, the development of the empire constituted one of the key defining elements of the French nation:

> What is France? … I suggest an answer to this question, which without making any absurd claim to be comprehensive or definitive, aims to begin to face up to the most powerful taboo in our history. The question of what is France is inextricably bound up with French colonisation, which is the last in a long line of great social, political and cultural 'revolutions', which have made the French nation what it is. (Balibar 1992: 57)

The uneasy marriage of a homogeneous national identity and culture with Republican universalist idealism at home, mirrored the contradictions within the discourses of French imperialism. The latter rationalised its colonial enterprise in the name of its universal mission, at the same time as it excluded the vast majority of its colonial subjects from participation as citizens of the empire. Ironically, it was the export of the French public school system that came to the rescue. A system that had been the vehicle for promoting equality in the widest sense at home took on instead in the colonies a much more ambivalent role.

Specificity and Contradictions of the Republican Discourse of Empire

Although the realities of the imperialist relation precluded the possibility of an empire-wide citizenship, the school nonetheless held out the prospect of assimilation to all those who passed through the French education system, with full French citizenship as the ultimate prize. As the main vehicle for the inculcation of Republican ideology amongst the colonised peoples, it could create aspirations to equal treatment, which only a small minority could transform into reality if the empire were to survive. The reality, therefore, was that access to education itself was also restricted. Albert Sarraut, Governor-General of Indochina from 1911 to 1916, then several times Minister for Colonies and Prime Minister, as well as author of *Grandeur et servitude coloniales*, published in 1931, was one of those who defended the restriction of higher education to a tiny minority of colonial 'subjects', on the grounds of hereditary and intellectual factors.[17] In French West Africa in 1945, only

5 per cent of the population attended school. In Algeria in 1939–40, out of a 'Muslim' population of seven million, there were only 114,000 children attending primary school, 1,500 in secondary schools and only 94 students at the University of Algiers (Suret-Canale 2001). For this elite group, the school could just possibly open the door to assimilation. At the same time, by peddling the same version of the homogeneous national culture throughout the schools of the empire, it ensured that the real relations of domination remained in place, so that even those who constituted the small elite and were allowed a measure of assimilation would continue to know their place. Any child forced to learn by heart and recite passages about 'Our ancestors the Gauls ...', 'who were mighty and strong ...', as recounted, for instance, in the semi-autobiographical novel by the Tunisian writer Hachemi Baccouche, *Ma foi demeure* (1958: 16), and by numerous other writers (Kessous 1994), would understand that they would always remain alienated at least in some measure and never able to participate fully in the French national community.

Thus, in most cases, the education system acted as an effective barrier to progression towards full assimilation, both in the cultural and, perhaps more importantly, in the political sense. One of the qualifications for the acquisition of French citizenship was a certain level of educational attainment, involving, sometimes explicitly, the repudiation of any other cultural inheritance. As we have seen, in Algeria, full French citizenship was dependent upon renunciation of the *statut personnel* – effectively a repudiation of the Muslim religion.

The dual college system introduced into Algeria after the Second World War, was, in fact, based on the differentiation of particular religious communities, notwithstanding the fact that this notion ran counter to the secular principles underpinning the Republic, in which religion, along with other particular, differentiating features, is assumed to have no role in the political domain and certainly not as a qualification for citizenship. Benjamin Stora has drawn out the implications of this contradiction in the case of colonial Algeria, where:

> Citizenship was determined in accordance with the *community of origin* (as defined by religion). This was a denial of the principles of the Republic, in a territory which was nonetheless considered to be a mere extension of France. The principles of 1789 in fact dissociated the existence of people from their function, caste, ethnic origin, or religion for the granting of their civic rights. (Stora 1992: 22–23)

Moreover, the image of the colonial Other as 'native', *indigène*, which had been incorporated into colonial propaganda under the regime of Albert Sarraut at the Colonial Ministry in the 1920s and 1930s, was not only based on the stereotypes of race, colour and geographical origin, but also on the notion of religious difference. Indeed, this was a deep-rooted perception that took on new life during the Algerian conflict. As Jean-Luc Einaudi has pointed out, Michel Debré explicitly referred to the need to launch a crusade of Christianity against Islam in an article in the *Courrier de la Nation* of September 1958 (Einaudi 1991: 25).

From the point of view of the colonised peoples, then, the Republican discourse of empire clearly had its limitations, as well as its partial and, indeed, remarkable successes. Moreover, discourse and ideology were not the only means available for the governance of the empire. The actual or threatened use of the forces of repression was never absent and had provided the main bastion for the perpetuation of colonial rule from the outset.

In 1843, Lieutenant-Colonel de Montagnac suggested in one of his letters from Algeria that:

> Any part of the population which does not accept our conditions must be wiped out. Everything must be taken and pillaged, with no consideration for age or sex: grass must not be allowed to grow, wherever the French army treads. Whoever wants the end result must also be prepared to accept the means, whatever our philosophers may say. All the good soldiers whom I have the honour of commanding have been warned by me that if they should happen to bring me an Arab alive, they will get a thrashing with the blade of my sabre … this is the way to wage war against the Arabs; kill all the men over fifteen years of age, take all the women and children and ship them out to the Marquesas or somewhere else. In other words, annihilate anything which refuses to crawl at our feet like a dog. (Montagnac 1885)

In the event, Montagnac himself was killed by the forces of the Emir Abdelkader two years later, in 1845. However, similar views were still being expressed throughout the period of French rule. None other than Alexis de Tocqueville, author of *De la démocratie en Amérique*, justified a policy of total warfare and laying waste to the countryside throughout the 1840s in a series of writings and reports as a result of several visits to Algeria (Le Cour Grandmaison 2005). This was a vision of the opportunities presented by France's trans-Mediterranean frontier, inspired by those of the American frontier and the conquest of the West, with all that implied for the extermination of the native American peoples. In 1882, one could read in Le Courrier d'Oran (24 May) that 'we know of no better policy than the one adopted by Moses in respect of the Midianites. He exterminated all the males, only sparing females who were virgins, who were given to the soldiers. This practice may seem cruel to the short-sighted, but in fact it was the only intelligent thing to do.'

French army archives, recently opened to the public, have shown that the French authorities were aware of the practice of torture by the security forces in Algeria from at least 1949, even before the war of independence had begun. In 1999, it was noted in *Le Monde* that two of Algeria's governors-general had condemned the practice of torture, which was later to become systematic in the war itself (*Le Monde*, 5 February 1999). When necessary, violence would also be deployed in mainland France itself, as with the savage repression and killings of demonstrating Algerians in Paris on 17 October 1961 (Einaudi 1991).

The discourse deployed to rationalise imperial rule was undoubtedly much more convincing when it acted as a means to justify the imperial undertaking to the home-

grown public in metropolitan France. One of the key elements of this rationalisation was the notion of the *mission civilisatrice*, the 'civilising mission', of the colonial power. Jules Ferry famously claimed in his speech to the Chambre des députés of 28 July 1885 that the civilisation by the 'superior races' of the 'inferior races' was not just a 'right' but also a 'duty'; indeed, it was a right because it was a duty. There was no question, in his mind, that the Rights of Man did not apply to Africans in their present state of non-civilisation. This was the rationalisation of colonial conquest, not for pleasure or to exploit the weak but to raise them to the level of civilisation. The Freemasons also concurred, affirming that 'the work of colonisation of the Third Republic is fundamentally one of civilisation' (quoted in Ager 1996: 12 – his translation). This view did not, however, go unchallenged. Clemenceau, in particular, drew attention to the dangers of such an approach in the country of the Rights of Man (Chambre des députés, 30 July 1885), and the unacceptability of such a rationalisation of conquest.

The notion of the 'civilising mission' was not an invention of Third Republic imperialism; it had come into currency before. Victor Hugo, for example, in a conversation with Bugeaud, described in rapturous terms the conquest of Algeria as the march of civilisation against barbarism, with the French fulfilling their mission to bring light to a benighted people, taking over from the Greeks this mission to enlighten the planet.[18] Edouard Alletz, writing in 1837, also described the civilising mission that had fallen to France, making it clear that civilisation would be imposed by force of arms if necessary: 'There is one aim that in its essence befits our country: this aim is the civilisation of the globe. France is unable to keep things to herself. She runs, she flies to communicate light and life to all peoples: she will even compel them, by force of arms, to bear the full burden of the gifts that she bestows' (quoted in Kessous 1994: 78).

Although this can be seen, to some extent, as the French version of the notion of the 'white man's burden', which was common currency in the British Empire, its ideological underpinning and political outcomes were rather different. However, like the 'white man's burden', the *mission civilisatrice* was conceived as the duty of a people supposed superior in terms of physical, intellectual and moral attributes to the inferior races that they had conquered. Indeed, it was this very superiority that had rendered the imperial conquests possible, and even necessary or inevitable. It was also this superiority that had enabled the white man to progress to a higher level of civilisation, defined in terms of educational attainment and knowledge, economic and technological development and high moral qualities. It was often linked with the suppression of barbaric practices, supposedly only indulged in by the non-civilised. This was notably the case with the ideology which, by masquerading as a crusade against Arab and African slave traders operating in the Congo, managed to draw a cloak over the brutal realities actually perpetrated in the Belgian King Leopold's personal colonial fiefdom (Hochschild 1999).

At the time of the 1885 Berlin Conference, Bismarck formulated the notion thus: 'associate the African native with civilisation by opening up the interior of the Continent to commerce; provide the inhabitants with the means of instruction and education by

encouraging Missions and enterprises which will encourage useful knowledge; and ensure the suppression of slavery' (quoted in Ager 1996: 13 – his translation).

Whatever the grounds for the belief in racial superiority, either within a God-given hierarchy of inherent essentialist ranking of racial categories, or stamped with the credentials of scientific theory as a contingent product of the historico-evolutionary process, the burden of duty was articulated essentially as a moral one. This could assume disinterested forms in the shape of the ideology of selfless commitment to public service, characteristic of the more idealistic colonial administrator, or the missionary's calling to raise the moral and spiritual level of the 'heathen' and convert them to the Christian faith. However, in all cases, it assumed the notion of racial superiority, aligned with greater power. Sarraut notably defined the *mission civilisatrice* as 'le droit du plus fort d'aider le plus faible' ('the right of the strongest to help the weakest'), in which the notion of 'duty' was eclipsed by the notion of 'right' associated with might. Ernest Renan, a favourite of the Third Republic for his anticlericalism, made no bones about his belief in the inequality of races. In his *Dialogues philosophiques* (1876), he justified colonisation through the argument of the rightful subordination of the lower to the higher races.[19]

There is no doubt that a significant body of French colonial opinion shared much the same kind of ideas as these. Léon Blum made this explicit, in an intervention to the Chambre des députés on 9 July 1925, when he said, 'We love our country too much to dissociate ourselves from the expansion of French thought and civilisation. We recognise that there is a right, and even a duty, for superior races to draw to them those races that have not attained the same level of culture and to summon them to progress.'

In the French case, however, the *mission civilisatrice*, as taken up by the Republican champions of empire, was not just defined in terms of race; the universal values of the Enlightenment also formed an essential reference point. At any rate, they had to be taken into account. Thus, while the applicability of the universal Rights of Man to the colonised and 'native' peoples remained something of a grey area for most, and seen explicitly in black and white terms by some, the archetypal colonist in the French Enlightenment mould took upon himself the mission to bring the light of reason and science to the dark regions of the planet, where primitiveness, obscurantism and barbarism held sway. It was when, and only when, the 'natives' had been sufficiently educated that they could aspire to the full enjoyment of the political rights associated with the Rights of Man. This could be postponed indefinitely, mainly by restricting access to educational advancement to a small elite, and indeed the justification of the continuing presence of the French colonial power relied on this indefinite postponement.

At the root of the difficulties was the contradiction between the universalism associated with the Rights of Man and the dualism of conceptions of the peoples of the earth, in which they were variously divided between Christians and heathens, men and savages, humans and non-humans, civilised and barbarians, superior and inferior races. Some of these categories implied an absolute, qualitative opposition; others were framed in more relative or quantitative terms, such as the distinction between the *plus évolués*

and the *moins évolués*. In the early phases of imperialism, the dualism took the form of a religious divide, between the Christians and the heathens. Indeed, this divide provided the justification for the domination by Christians of the non-Christian peoples. The notion of Christendom had developed as a system of order in Europe, in which spiritual and temporal authorities derived their legitimacy from God through a well-defined, stratified hierarchy, in which rights and duties were clearly defined, and where the common faith implied the observance of certain common values. This order did not extend to the non-Christians, who were outside the frame of the moral and legal rights and duties set out under this system. Thus, the Lateran Council of 1139 had decreed that Christians should not use the crossbow against other Christians, although its use against 'heathens' and 'heretics' was permitted (Mazrui 1990: 11). However, in spite of the supposed community existing between those who professed the same faith, fighting between Christians was not unknown, along with the use of the crossbow.

One of the problems with later, secular notions rationalising imperialism was that they had not entirely broken with this dualism characteristic of the earlier ideology. In fact, the supposed universality of the human race had been and remained a matter of some debate, and the division between Christians and heathens was often articulated in terms of the division between men and savages, humans and non-humans. Even when the old dualism based on religion was considered inappropriate, and the humanity of all peoples was accepted, the division was often simply replaced by new forms, in which relative, quantitative terms became more familiar – civilised and barbarians, superior and inferior, *plus évolués* and *moins évolués*. If the humanity of all peoples was accepted, then it became possible to envisage a new type of conversion, in which the conquered were not simply converted more or less against their will, to facilitate their control by the conquerors, but one that envisaged the uplifting of people in the inferior category to a higher stage. The process might take time, but was not ruled out as impossible.

No imperial power could survive long without offering its colonial subjects a vision of a free future. This was the case with both the British and French Empires. The differences between them lay not in any different conception regarding the superiority of the coloniser over the colonised, but in the different strategic goals they held out to the colonised.

The British tended to hold out the ultimate goal of self-government and thus disengagement when the colonised peoples had progressed and become sufficiently civilised and capable. In theory, this implied a staged process of development and preparation for ever greater involvement in their own representation, administration and government. This was not to mean representation in the metropolitan institutions. In spite of Queen Victoria's proclamation in 1858, in which she defended the principle of equality of all those in the empire, following the imposition of the direct rule of the British Crown over India after the Mutiny of 1857, this was not translated into representation in the British Parliament. This is hardly surprising, as the promise of equality remained essentially without effect. Moreover, at this time, only a minority of the British population was represented in Parliament. Unlike the (male) populations of the 'old' French colonies, British colonial subjects were not to

be offered representation in the British Parliament. Indeed, when the first non-white MP, Dadabhai Naoroji, entered the House of Commons in 1892, it was as the Member of Parliament for the London constituency of Finsbury Central.

The French, on the other hand, offered the prospect of eventual assimilation of all the colonised peoples as full citizens of the French Republic. In spite of its overt secularism, what was proposed by the most fervent advocates of assimilationism was in many respects a process, very similar to a religious conversion. As such, it was also based on a dualistic conception, like that which had operated in conversions to Christianity, or indeed to Islam. Thus, not only was the 'pure', assimilationist model influenced by the accretions of centuries of ideological history, but it was also inevitably marked by the realities of imperial power.

In reality, the political status of the different colonised peoples differed widely according to their historical and geographical circumstances. This was true not only for their administrative status, whether under the tutelage of the Ministry for Colonies, the Ministry of Home Affairs or the Foreign Ministry, depending on how they were viewed in relation to the metropole. It was also true of the eventual prospects for their future evolution, particularly as far as those in the protectorates were concerned, for whom the different ideology of 'associationism' had been preferred.

Racism, Empire and Further Contradictions within Republican Ideology

It is clear that the Republican discourse of empire was not the only perspective on offer. From its origins, the imperial expansion of all the European powers involved was accompanied by the development of an ideology of racism, sometimes justified in the name of religion, which established a racial hierarchy of exclusion from the true faith. At the time of the first conquests of the New World in the sixteenth century, there were debates as to whether the native Americans were human beings at all, with the celebrated defence of their humanity by Bartolomeo de Las Casas (see Chapter 3). The growth of slavery as an economic system and the consequent dehumanisation of the slave through his or her reduction to the status of a chattel led to the entrenchment of racism for the rationalisation it provided for such a system.

Indeed, racism appears not just as an ideological option but as an integral part of the ideology that accompanied the development of capitalism. As Samir Amin has pointed out, it became a necessary part of the 'European' ideology, which took shape through a number of different phases:

> This European ideology is constructed in stages from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment up until the nineteenth century by the invention of the eternal truths required for this legitimation. The 'Christianophile' myth, the myth of Greek ancestry, and the artificial, antithetical construct of Orientalism define the new European and Eurocentric culturalism, thereby condemning it irremediably to consort with its damned soul: ineradicable racism. (Amin 1989: 77)

Far from promoting universalism in fact, the European imperialist conquest of much of the world did not bring about the homogenisation of societies, but accentuated polarisation, crystallising the centre/periphery relation: 'On the contrary, this conquest progressively created a growing polarization at the heart of the system, crystallizing the capitalist world into fully developed centres and peripheries incapable of closing the ever widening gap, making this contradiction within 'actually existing' capitalism – a contradiction insurmountable within the framework of our capitalist system – the major and most explosive contradiction of our time' (Amin 1989: 75).

France had also had its share of racist ideologues, promoting notions of racial superiority both at home and abroad. Indeed, the new form of pseudoscientific ideas of race and politics that were to flourish in the course of the nineteenth century had in fact taken root in France in the aftermath of the Revolution and as part of the reaction against it, with Gobineau and others of his ilk pioneering an ideological strain that was to end in the extermination camps of Auschwitz. The sociologist, Gustave Le Bon, renowned for his work on the psychology of the crowd (*De la psychologie des foules* (1895)), proposed a model more along the lines of the British model, separate development, no mixing of races, etc., in opposition to the French (and Portuguese) assimilationist model. He warned against educating or assimilating the natives, as this would not change their nature, but only give them the means to rise up against the Europeans. His views also extended to the intrinsic inferiority of women and the reckless foolishness of those who would educate them.

However, the major rationalisation of the notion of French superiority related to the domain of civilisation and culture, where a belief in cultural superiority was linked with the notion of a duty to convey this culture to the world. As Ager says: 'A strong influence on those who supported colonial expansion in the nineteenth century was the belief in the indefinably superior nature of French civilisation and culture, and particularly the belief that France had a special role to play in bringing her culture to the world' (Ager 1996: 60–61). That the superiority was 'indefinable' indicates strongly the ideological nature of the belief. In this vision of France's mission, it is most frequently compared to the sun, with the natural quality of beaming its brilliance to the rest of the globe, expressed most evocatively in the French expression *'rayonnement de la culture'.*

It is hardly surprising that there were contradictions in the discourse of those appointed to govern and educate the colonised peoples. One of the key contradictions was at the heart of the notion of the *mission civilisatrice* itself. The public education system was one of the major vehicles for bringing the uncivilised into civilisation, and one of the key values that it was supposed to inculcate was the ideal of the secular Republic. However, public education and schooling as applied in the colonies were not so completely dissociated from the religious evangelising of the Catholic orders and lay missionaries. It appears that the colonies did not experience the same, clear dichotomy between public/secular and private/Catholic schooling that continued to exist in mainland France, at least until the Fifth Republic, when the two began to be brought into a closer working relationship, in particular through

the 1959 Debré law, which encouraged cooperation between private education and the state and permitted a measure of state funding for the Catholic schools.

Indeed, given that, in the colonies, state public education was reserved only for the elite and the obligation of compulsory schooling did not exist for the whole population, it was usually left to the religious foundations, both Christian, such as the Missionnaires d'Afrique (the Order of White Fathers – *Pères Blancs* – and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa – *Soeurs Blanches*), and Muslim, to provide basic education for the rest.

Abroad, in the colonies, the distinctions were fudged and the old conflict between secularism and clericalism was muted in the name of a common sense of nationhood on behalf of the colonial power. Colonial administrators working for the Third Republic, public school teachers, priests, missionaries and Catholic educators were united by a common sense of their colonial mission. In the same way as Clemenceau characterised the French Revolution as a *bloc*, the French abroad formed a *bloc* in the service of the empire, in which their ideological differences counted for less than they would have done at home. A simple but striking illustration of this is the physical proximity of the headquarters of the French Republic's administrative headquarters in the Indian colony of Chandernagore and the Catholic church, schools and convent.

We shall be looking further at some of these contradictions in the Republican discourse of empire, together with the basic contradiction, which we have already touched on and which contained the seed of the empire's own downfall. For, if the colonised peoples learned their lessons well, they also learned that the Revolutionary discourse of modern democracy gave them the ideas and concepts that they needed to turn the tables against the colonial oppressors and achieve their liberation, although this notion of a lineage with Western ideology has not gone without challenge, as we shall see.

There is one further contradiction in French Republican ideology that needs to be tabled at this stage. This concerns the contradiction within the notion of history itself, which has assumed such importance in the legitimisation of the French state. History, usually written with a capital H in French, provides the material for the foundation of the French Republic. As such, it relies heavily on the notion of tradition; *la tradition républicaine* ('the Republican tradition') is one of the stock-in-trade phrases of French political discourse. Yet, at the heart of this 'tradition', indeed as its founding principle, one finds a basic discontinuity, a rupture with the past, dramatised in the French Revolution. On the one hand, this is the modernist notion of history as progress, looking to the future; on the other, the historical legitimacy of the French state relies on its roots in the past. The ambivalence implicit in the notion of history has been further accentuated in recent years by an increased importance given to the notions of memory and heritage, particularly in connection with issues of national identity. The future project contained in the Revolutionary view of history has largely disappeared from mainstream political discourse.

It is thus hardly surprising that this ideological framework is now increasingly perceived as inadequate in the postcolonial age. However, the 'end of modernity' remains problematic as far as post-colonial relations are concerned.

Notes

1. The text of the Code Noir may be consulted at http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/amsudant/guyanefr1685.htm (retrieved 26 December 2004) or http://www.afcam.org/Doc_illustration/CodeNoir/LECODENOIR.htm (retrieved 16 February 2005).

2. Blaise Diagne (1872–1934), from Senegal, was the first black *député* in the Chambre des députés, from 1914 to 1934, and Junior Minister for the Colonies in 1931. He was followed by others, including the Guianese Gaston Monnerville (1897–1991), first elected in 1932 and President of the Senate from 1958 to 1968. However, it was only after the Second World War, that there was any significant measure of representation, including Lamine Gueye (1891–1968), elected in 1945, Félix Houphouët-Boigny (1905–93), member of the Assemblée nationale from 1945, then Minister in various governments from 1956, until he became President of the Ivory Coast in 1960 until his death, amongst many others.

3. See Thomson (1968: 308–10), for Ferry's speech on the economic necessity of imperialism.

4. In particular, Balibar (1992: 61–62) quotes the following passage from R. Carré de Malberg, *Contribution à la théorie générale de l'Etat* (1920)/1962, Vol. 1, pp. 243 ff.:

    il suffit de comparer le cas du citoyen avec celui de l'étranger se trouvant sur le sol français: en ce qui concerne l'individu qui n'est pas membre de la collectivité française, la notion de puissance se dégage pleinement; cet étranger est vraiment soumis à une puissance extérieure de domination. Voir dans le même sens ce que dit M. Duguit ... des indigènes des colonies ou des habitants des pays de protectorat, qui sont sujets de la puissance française sans être français ou en tout cas sans être citoyens français. Les nationaux, au contraire, dans la mesure où ils ont été 'représentés' (*Décl. de 1789*, art. 6) à la confection des lois par les organes de la collectivité, n'apparaissent pas, dans leur subordination à ces lois, comme les sujets d'une puissance supérieure, mais on peut dire qu'en se conformant à la loi ils observent leur propre volonté ... les citoyens, en tant que membres constitutifs de la collectivité souveraine, ne peuvent être considérés comme étrangers aux actes de souveraineté qu'accomplit la collectivité par l'intermédiaire de ses organes; ils y participent en ce sens et pour ce motif que la nation ... n'est pas autre chose que l'universalité des citoyens.

    This passage also clearly shows the limitations of the concept of 'universality'.

5. Cette distinction est inextricablement liée à l'articulation des pouvoirs de l'Etat en pouvoir *de la loi* et pouvoir *réglementaire*: le premier impliquant en dernière instance un contrôle de ceux qui incarnent la souveraineté nationale et constituent (par leur vote) les organes de l'Etat (ou du moins sont censés en être à leur origine); le second ayant pour champ d'exercice la gestion quotidienne des problèmes d'ordre public non maîtrisables par la loi, mais aussi et surtout la gestion des territoires et des populations coloniales. (Balibar 1992: 60)

6. See Gambetta in a speech in 1878: 'L'Algérie doit être conduite comme le reste de la France, parce qu'elle est une terre française par excellence' (Gambetta 1883: 101). Jules Favre, on the same occasion, made this unwittingly ironic statement: 'nous n'avons qu'une pensée: faire de l'Algérie une terre vraiment française; par le cœur, elle l'est; par le droit, c'est la conquête qui nous reste à faire, et nous y travaillerons de toute notre énergie' (Gambetta 1883: 103).

7. This was stipulated in a Sénatus Consulte of 14 July 1865.

8. 'Cette universalité de la langue française … tient à des causes si délicates et si puissantes à la fois que, pour les démêler, il s'agit de montrer jusqu'à quel point tant de causes diverses

ont pu se combiner et s'unir pour faire à cette langue une fortune si prodigieuse' (Rivarol, quoted at http://www.france.diplomatie.fr/francophonie/citations.html).

9. In his speech of 2 May 1946 at the Sorbonne, on the occasion of Descartes's 350th anniversary, Thorez claimed that: 'Le monde aime la France parce que, dans la France, il reconnaît Descartes et ceux qui l'ont continué … A travers les tempêtes qui se sont abattues sur les hommes, c'est Descartes qui, de son pas allègre, nous conduit vers les lendemains qui chantent' (quoted in *Le Monde des livres*, 29 March 1996, p. VI).

10. Family ties or filiation was also a problematic preoccupation at the level of personal identity; see Simon During, 'Rousseau's Patrimony: Primitivism, Romance and Becoming Other', in Barker, Hulme and Iversen 1994: 47–71.

11. See Raphaëlle Bacqué, 'La droite sénatoriale accepte la parité approuvée par Jacques Chirac', *Le Monde*, 5 March 1999.

12. The status of the members of the Assemblée nationale is defined as follows: 'Les députés sont investis d'un mandat national. Bien que chacun d'eux soit l'élu d'une seule circonscription, il représente la nation tout entière. Ils se déterminent librement dans l'exercice de leur mandat, n'étant juridiquement liés par aucun engagement. Tout mandat impératif est en effet nul.' For further information, consult http://www.assemblee-nat.fr/connaissance/election-depute.asp.

13. This theory was ironically used to support the weakening of legislative power in the Gaullist constitution of the Fifth Republic.

14. Quel paradoxe, plus apparent que réel! C'est un juif français et assimilé, pétri d'un patriotisme *maternel* ('Juste ou injuste, c'est ma patrie') qui donne le coup d'envoi au sionisme … Alors que le patriotisme de la plupart des juifs nationaux est de type 'paternel', qu'il s'apparente plutôt – du moins à la première génération – à celui du jeune Bonaparte: 'Brusquement la Révolution le convertit au patriotisme français le plus ardent. Mais prenons garde. Conversion avant tout cérébrale en même temps que passionnelle. Ce n'est pas à la tradition de France, ce n'est pas à l'immense passé français qu'il se rallie, c'est à l'avenir français tel qu'il peut le comprendre, c'est aux principes abstraits que la Révolution vient de se donner ou plutôt de donner au monde comme décalogue universel.' (René Grousset, *Figures de Proue*, Plon, 1949)

Or le patriotisme de Dreyfus est plus viscéral que cérébral, plus proche de Barrès ou Mauriac que de Valéry. Il n'est pas de *conversion* … Sa voix ne fait-elle pas, par instants, écho à celle de Du Bellay: 'Je fixe l'horizon les yeux tournés vers la France, dans l'espoir que ce sera enfin le jour où ma patrie me rappellera à elle.' (Lévy 1982: 256)

15. This whole conflict came to the fore once again at the time of the celebrations of the 1,500th anniversary of the baptism of Clovis in 1996 (*Le Monde*, 26 July 1996).

16. 'Le terme de *nation* change de sens: ce n'est plus l'ensemble des citoyens, c'est l'idée d'une *appartenance* historique, centrée sur l'Etat. A l'extrême, à travers la mythification de la langue, de la culture et des traditions nationales, ce sera la variante française du nationalisme, l'idée d'une communauté morale et culturelle fondée sur les traditions institutionnelles' (Balibar 1992: 142).

17. 'l'enseignement supérieur suppose, avec une hérédité préparatoire, un équilibre des facultés réceptives, un jugement, dont seule une faible minorité de nos sujets et protégés est encore capable' (Sarraut 1931: 152).

18. Voilà ce qu'est devenu ce que l'on appelait le grenier des Romains! Mais, en serait-il ce que vous dites, je crois que notre nouvelle conquête est chose heureuse et grande. C'est la civilisation qui marche sur la barbarie. C'est un peuple éclairé qui va trouver

un peuple dans la nuit. Nous sommes les Grecs du monde: c'est à nous d'illuminer le monde. Notre mission s'accomplit, je ne chante qu'hosanna. (Hugo 1841: 52)

19. 'Les hommes ne sont pas égaux, les races ne sont pas égales. Le nègre, par exemple, est fait pour servir aux grandes choses voulues et conçues par le Blanc' (quoted by Taguieff 1997: 95).

Chapter 2
The European Legacy

This chapter will begin the discussion of the counter-discourses or dissident ideologies that were to come into being as a direct response to the experience of imperialism and colonialism. The discourses that will figure here are primarily those that challenge the political and military power of the imperialist rulers, as well as those that bring the whole economic and social basis of imperialism into question, although there will also be examples of aspects of more conciliatory types of thinking that attempted to find compromise solutions or even engage in outright collaboration.

Indeed, the term 'counter-discourse' has to be used with great circumspection, as it could be interpreted as a response to a dominant discourse and thus operative entirely within a presumed self-contained domain of discourse or ideology. This interpretation is not applicable to the kinds of ideas that were developed to articulate the historical challenge to dominant systems of economic and political power in the context of real political and ideological struggles. Thus, whilst it is necessary to analyse the way in which they challenge, subvert or destroy the premises of the dominant ideology and prepare a counter-statement to it, it also needs to be stressed that they have to be looked at in their wider context. After all, anti-imperialist and anticolonialist ideas did not come into being simply to counter the imperialist and racist ideologies that were brought into use to give credence to the various imperial enterprises. Although the discrediting and demolition of the dominant ideology might be accomplished as a secondary feature, the primary purpose was to legitimise and rationalise the challenge to the imperial structures of power, on the economic, social, political, military and cultural levels, as well as the ideological. This is ideology functioning as a mobilising tool for those social forces that could counter the dominant power at all these levels.

Resistance to imperialism and colonialism is at least as old as imperialism itself. From the first conquests, the military incursion into another people's territory tended to provoke military resistance on the part of the indigenous inhabitants, with a greater or lesser degree of success on their part. There had also been rejection of the other aspects of colonisation, including the ideological and the cultural, as well as the political and economic domination of France and the other imperialist powers,

throughout the colonised world. Anti-imperialism is therefore not a comparatively recent phenomenon, confined to a historical stage of 'anticolonialism', linked to the development of nationalist movements mostly dating from the early part of the twentieth century, but has been an integral part of the history of empire from the start. The anticolonial and national liberation struggles that were ultimately to lead to the end of formal political control, in the decolonisation process of the mid-twentieth century are clearly a crucial part of the fight back against imperialism. However, we shall also need to consider other important struggles and the ideological forms that the resistance assumed at earlier stages in the historical process. In this light, the successful revolt of the slaves of Saint-Domingue and the subsequent establishment of the state of Haiti will be seen as events of primary significance, which brought into relief, at an early stage and in stark fashion, some of the fundamental contradictions of Enlightenment discourse.

Although the catalyst for the revolt in Saint-Domingue was the radically new development constituted by the French Revolution, the ideological debates that it produced can also be situated as the culmination of the long-standing confrontation between those who accepted the basic humanity of those who were colonised or enslaved and those for whom the latter were not to be included within the human species. The Declaration of the Rights of Man in France in 1789, with its universalist pretensions to equality and proclaimed rejection of hierarchies within the human race, was to bring this issue to the point of crisis, at which it had to be faced head-on.

The Ambiguities of Enlightenment Discourse

Some of the ambiguities of the discourses associated with the Enlightenment have already been suggested in Chapter 1 of this book. This chapter will explore further the issue of their subversive potential. In other words, what is at stake here is the extent to which these ideas have been used to challenge the dominant power relations of imperialism and the limits within which they may operate as counter-discourses.

The fact that the French bourgeoisie's political challenge to feudalism and absolutism took such a radical form in the French Revolution, for specific historical reasons which we cannot dwell on here, was to have an impact that long outlived the particular historical events that took place at the cusp of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its significance was also to penetrate well beyond the boundaries of France itself and also beyond those parts of the globe that were already bound to France in privileged relations of power and domination at the time.

There has already been some discussion of the contradictions that were inherent from the outset within this ideological corpus, especially the contradiction between the universalism of the principles enunciated and the particular contingency of the circumstances of their birth and applicability, as well as the related contradiction between the ideal theory and the reality of its application in practice. This analysis will now be taken further and related to the use and, some would say, abuse of this ideology by those looking for instruments with which to challenge French imperial power.

The Saint-Domingue slave rebellion provides an obvious starting point for this discussion, given the wholehearted embrace of the universalist principles of the Rights of Man by its leaders, such as Toussaint L'Ouverture, whose objective was to claim, in the first instance, liberty, equality and full citizenship as part of the new political nation (James (1938)/1980; Césaire (1961)/1981; Geggus 1982; Bénot 1988). Yet, for many years, this successful revolt, which led eventually to the creation of the independent state of Haiti, was treated as marginal to the main accounts of the French Revolution, and it was largely due to the efforts of black Caribbeans that its importance began to be recognised. The groundbreaking study by C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins. Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938), was crucial in giving it due recognition, as was the work of Aimé Césaire, with his *Toussaint Louverture. La Révolution française et le problème colonial* (1961) and his fictionalised and dramatic account, *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* (1963).

The Saint-Domingue Revolution was, in fact, absolutely central to the whole Revolutionary process, on both the economic and the political levels, and crystallised the key issues and contradictions, some of which have still to be resolved. These will be dealt with in depth in a number of chapters in this book. For the moment, let it suffice to say that the issues raised by Saint-Domingue went beyond the questions of restriction and exclusion.

Of course, the slaves and the 'mulattos' were, to varying degrees, according to the lights of the different parties, excluded from the brotherhood of man, by virtue of their condition as blacks or part-blacks. In the case of the slaves, they were not considered as human beings at all, but as chattels to be bought and sold; the defence of slavery was intimately bound up with the defence of the inalienable right to private property. Indeed, plantation owners, slave masters and merchants, operating in the lucrative trade between France and its Caribbean colony, some of whom were grouped together in the influential Club Massiac, were amongst the most vociferous supporters of the early Revolutionary cause. Many of them had little interest in, or enthusiasm for, the abolition of slavery itself and, although there were some elements within the ranks of the French Revolutionary political ideologues and activists who accepted the slaves' case, there were others who did not. Even the Société des Amis des Noirs, founded in 1788, argued mainly for the abolition of the slave trade, rather than slavery itself, and then a staged emancipation for the slaves. Its founder, Brissot, argued for the Saint-Domingue revolt to be put down.

Nonetheless, on 24 March 1792, the Legislative Assembly had extended to free blacks the right to elect representatives to the Assembly in Paris, as it had earlier to whites and those of mixed race. Slavery was abolished in Saint-Domingue in August 1793 and then, on 4 February 1794, supported by the Abbé Grégoire and Danton, but with a large measure of indifference on the part of other members, the Convention decreed the abolition of slavery in all the French colonies (Spillmann 1981; Blackburn 1988). This was in spite of Robespierre's reservations (Césaire (1961)/1981: 186), which were shared by others and, according to Sala-Molins, were more because of rivalry with the British and the political wish to safeguard the colonies (Sala-Molins 1987). It is no surprise that many of those with reservations or

objections were to be found amongst the mercantile capitalist class, heavily involved with the colonial trade, who wanted freedom from feudal restrictions and an entry into power, but were also determined to defend and promote their own economic and financial interests, founded on the slave economy.

However, it would be inaccurate to restrict the material interest to the limited group of people who were directly involved in this trade. The colony of Saint-Domingue and the riches it generated were quite central to the burgeoning capitalist economy of France, which from the outset had extended beyond the borders of the Hexagon.[1] As C.L.R. James has pointed out (1938/1980: 47): 'The slave-trade and slavery were the economic basis of the French Revolution. "Sad irony of human history," comments Jaurès. "The fortunes created at Bordeaux, at Nantes, by the slave-trade, gave to the bourgeoisie the pride which needed liberty and contributed to human emancipation."'

Yet, whilst the opposition to the demands of the Black Jacobins was founded primarily on economic, rather than political, grounds, the arguments through which it was articulated had to be credible in terms of the current Revolutionary political consensus of liberty, equality and fraternity. It was, then, a question of finding arguments that would support the denial of rights to the black slaves, while not calling into question the fundamentals of the Revolution.

The denial of the black slaves' humanity, with the corollary of their exclusion from the human species, was the simple solution that had served in the past. However, more sophisticated arguments now needed to be sought. Some of these were ready to hand in the doctrine of private property rights, which had come into its own as one of the key strands of the discourse of the French Revolution. The slaves could not be freed, as this would impinge on the now sacred property rights of their owners. Moreover, although it is assumed that most of the philosophers of the Enlightenment had tended to view slavery as aberrant and abhorrent, there was no shortage of arguments, even amongst the *philosophes*, to justify slavery as a natural phenomenon, in terms that harked back to Aristotle's notion of 'natural slavery'. The novelty of these arguments related to their subtle adaptation in line with the burgeoning development of a worldwide imperialism, as their proponents took pains to hedge the validity of the notion with reservations about the types of people and the parts of the globe where it might be acceptable. As in many other cases, the 'natural order of things' gambit can be pressed into service to justify practically anything, even the excesses of Sadean libertarianism, though it is usually used to shore up the status quo, or those aspects of it that are most convenient.

The Enlightenment philosopher, Montesquieu, for instance, in *De l'esprit des lois*, blames the heat and torpor of certain climes for the existence of slavery, as a necessary means of coercing people to work. He is very clear that slavery is necessary in the Americas for economic reasons and to keep the price of sugar down. In such climates:

> slavery is therefore less shocking to Reason … However, as all men are born equal, it must be said that slavery is against nature, notwithstanding that in some countries, it is based on a natural Reason. (Montesquieu (1748)/1995 Book XV, Chapter VII: 'Autre origine du droit de l'esclavage')

> It is thus necessary to restrict natural slavery to certain particular countries of the world. (Book XV, Chapter VIII: 'Inutilité de l'esclavage parmi nous')

Moreover, Montesquieu is quite explicit that it is because of the colour of their skin that it is inconceivable that the black slaves have a soul. 'It is impossible', he says, 'that we could suppose these people to be human; because, if we supposed them to be human, we would begin to believe that we ourselves are not Christians' (Book XV, Chapter V: 'De l'esclavage des nègres')

Even the assumptions about Rousseau's opposition to slavery should not be taken for granted. His tirades against tyranny and servitude were based on abuses directed against Europeans, and there is no reference to black slavery in the colonies in the *Contrat social* (Rousseau 1762; Sala-Molins 1987). Of the *philosophes*, it was the Abbé Raynal who came out with what was the clearest critique of 'black' slavery and the slave trade in his *Histoire philosophique et politique des deux Indes* (Raynal (1770)/1981).

Clearly, the debates about slavery were complex, if not convoluted, not least because those engaged in these debates were doubtless aware of the contradictions inherent in their reasoning. Furthermore, various aspects were highlighted and different arguments assumed the ascendancy, in line with the actual progress and regression made by the struggles themselves and the dominance of particular socio-economic interests at key moments in the process.

In Saint-Domingue, the struggle for full political rights was a bloody one, with many setbacks on the way. If it seemed, for a moment, that the demands for full equality by the Black Jacobins could be met, with the abolition of slavery a significant milestone on the way, the illusion was soon to be shattered. Under the regime of Napoleon, there was a clear step back. Napoleon could not envisage the former slaves in the colonies having the same rights as Frenchmen and made the colonies subject to special legal provisions. Not only were slavery and the slave trade re-established by the law of 20 May 1802, but he also attempted to prevent the entry into France of black people and to impose customs duties on products coming from the colonies (James (1938)/1980; Spillmann 1981; Blackburn 1988). Troops were sent to Saint-Domingue to ensure the implementation of these measures and put down the revolt. Toussaint L'Ouverture was captured and shipped to France, where he died in imprisonment at the Fortress of Joux in 1803. Although the question of slavery was settled, temporarily and only in part of the French-controlled Caribbean, as a result of its brutal reimposition by Napoleon, the fiction of the political nation was irredeemably fractured in the process of the struggle. The possibility of achieving liberation as part of the French nation was dealt a severe blow, though not, as we shall see, a death blow. What had begun as a struggle for inclusion in the French Republic was transformed into the triumphant national liberation struggle of a whole people against France, an emergent nation pitting itself against a colonial power and emerging, at least partially, victorious with the establishment of the independent state of Haiti in 1804, under the leadership of Dessalines, who promptly declared himself Emperor.

Not only were the universalist limitations of the Revolutionary ideology of the Rights of Man exposed in the process, but it also put on the agenda the Rights of Nations and laid bare the barrenness of the Revolution's capacity to respond to this fundamental issue. This was a founding event in the anti-imperialist struggle and marks the emergence of a historically new phenomenon, the national liberation struggle, which was to provide an inspirational beacon for freedom fighters, particularly in the Caribbean and the Americas. In Haiti itself, the doors were opened to the development of a new type of national culture, deriving from links with the African past of the former slaves, evolving into new forms peculiar to the island, not least in the form of its own brand of voodoo.

It was not, of course, the first struggle for freedom against a colonial power. The American colonies had already waged their war of independence from England and achieved victory. One might therefore be tempted to conclude that there is a clear parallel here and that the two struggles fall into the same category. However, the American anticolonial struggle was a phenomenon of a fundamentally different order, in which the colonial settlers themselves asserted their independence from the metropolitan homeland and their freedom to continue the colonial enterprise, free from the tutelary hand of the mother country. Imperialism as such was not challenged in its essence; it was more like a change of personnel in the boardroom, as a result of the subsidiary asserting its independence of the parent company. The basic operations thereafter remained the same. Imperialism continued to flourish; the territory continued to be appropriated and the indigenous population wiped out; the slaves who had been transported to the North American continent to work the plantations remained enslaved as before.

If the French settlers in Saint-Domingue shared similar concerns with their American counterparts, as a result of their frustrations with the French Government bureaucracy and the economic restrictions created by what was known as the Exclusive, giving the monopoly of trade to and from the colony to the French mercantile bourgeoisie, their economic and political power was to be measured on a different scale from that of the American settlers. In any event, French 'settlers' in the Caribbean often maintained a dual existence, or were absentee plantation-owners, based in France for much of the time (James (1938)/1980: 29), or with interests straddling the Atlantic. Moreover, the divisions in Saint-Domingue society, with the big white planters at odds with other whites occupying various positions in the social hierarchy, and both groups at odds with the 'mulattos' and freed black slaves, many of whom, like Toussaint L'Ouverture himself, had acquired considerable property themselves, and, of course, all the former against the slaves, meant that, when the French Revolution erupted, these differences were to come to the fore and assume even more importance than any movement on the part of the settlers to assert their independence (James (1938)/1980: 62–84). The revolt of the slaves was to take the colony down a different route, beginning with the demand for freedom and only ultimately leading to independence.

This is not, then, to downplay the impact of the ideas that developed in the course of the American Revolution, particularly as a source of inspiration for

subsequent anticolonial struggles in the South American continent and elsewhere. As Ali Mazrui puts it: 'Curiously enough, the Americans became the pioneers of modern anti-imperialism. The American Declaration of Independence remains one of the landmarks of the history of decolonization in the modern world' (Mazrui 1990: 45). Indeed, Marat was to use the example of the American Revolution to justify his support for the Saint-Domingue rebellion, asking: 'if the inhabitants of our colonies have declared themselves free, how could we have the gall to dare to condemn them for following the example of the English colonies?' (quoted by Césaire (1961)/1981: 189–190).

In many ways, an argument can be made that due importance has not been given to this impact on countries within the orbit of France and her empire. It is clear that the American Revolution had a profound impact on the thinking leading to the French Revolution itself and its success undoubtedly served as an inspirational model. In content, however, it was as a bourgeois democratic revolution, in which the colonists wished to sever themselves from a feudal-tributary relationship with the parent country, whilst maintaining the imperialist relations that operated within the colonies themselves.

From all of the above, it will be clear that the use of the term 'anticolonial' in relation to the American Revolution can lead to significant confusion. The mantle of anticolonialism has provided a convenient ideological cloak for America's own evolution into an imperialist power, with external as well as internal pretensions, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Ironically, one of the countries to succumb to occupation by the USA was Haiti itself, which was taken over by the Americans from 1915 to 1934. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson had imposed a trade embargo on Haiti from the beginnings of its independence in 1806.

However, the force of this ideological perception of American anticolonialism can be demonstrated when even such a leader as Ho Chi Minh could, at least temporarily, be convinced of American anti-imperialist credentials. When he proclaimed Vietnam's independence from France in 1945, he borrowed the words of Thomas Jefferson and the American Declaration of Independence. Moreover, the French archives at Chandernagore show that when René Madec, the Breton soldier-adventurer, reported back to France in the 1770s on the possibilities of fomenting 'revolution' amongst the population of Bengal, so that they would rebel against the English (Barbé 1894; Meyer 1993), he was clearly inspired by the example of the American Revolution.

The attractions of the French Revolution to the colonised were also apparent at the time, as is clear in the case of Saint-Domingue. It was also the case that, when news of the French Revolution reached India in 1790 (*Annuaire des Etablissements français dans l'Inde* 1943: 22), it proved a powerful inspiration, not least to the Indian leader, Tipu Sultan, in his resistance to the British. Not only did he ally himself with the French from 1795, but he also took over many of the democratic features of the Revolution, calling himself 'Citizen Tipu', planting a tree of liberty, saluting the tricolour and attending the Jacobin Club that was set up in Seringapatam, before he was killed in battle in 1799. The impact of the French Revolution was, however, of a different order.

Although Revolutionary France did not promote anticolonialism as such, except as an incidental feature of its rivalry with Britain, the universal significance of the Revolution was assumed. If anything, this notion has not diminished over time, but has in fact become even more pronounced. Perhaps the most striking recent illustration of this was the choice of theme for the bicentennial celebrations of the Revolution in 1989, which focused on its role and universal significance for the world at large, whereas the centenary of 1889 had concentrated more on a celebration of the Republic, still fighting for survival in the face of challenges by counter-Revolutionary, anti-Republican forces in France at the time.

Republican Utopianism

For many of the colonised elite, who had been educated in French schools to believe in the Republican ideals, the discourse of the universal Rights of Man could provide an attractive framework of reference. This is hardly surprising, for it remained a powerful expression of the desire for liberty, equality and fraternity, and an intellectual foundation of the case for universal justice.

The Senegalese poet and statesman, Léopold Sédar Senghor, for instance, was apt to take a particularly rosy view of the matter, as here in his reflections on the Revolution of 1848 and the abolition of slavery under the Second Republic:

> It is in this way that men of colour, and Negroes in particular, have been able to attain not only the liberty of the citizen, but also and above all a personal life which is only made possible by culture; it is in this way that they have been able, in spite of the regression constituted by the Second Empire and the Third Republic, to bring their own contribution to modern-day French humanism, which is making itself truly universal, because it is fertilised by the sap of all races on the planet. (Senghor 1948: 1)

Even in more critical approaches, the challenge to the colonial power was often first articulated, not as a rejection of the official doctrine as such, but as a questioning of the gulf between the theory and its actual application in colonial practice. The confrontation between these ideas in the abstract and their utilitarian transformation into a particularist ideology justifying French colonial power, as well as the contradiction between the idealism of the discourse and the reality of the colonial experience as lived by the colonised, might be a source of alienation on the part of those who were educated in these values. For, when they took the universalist pretensions at face value, they were nonetheless excluded from full participation in a non-existent Republic of equal citizens. However, the position was often taken that things would be all right if the French authorities actually put into operation a political and administrative system that conformed to their proclaimed ideals. In a very direct way, then, the dominant discourse itself provided a frame of reference for a challenge to French power, in terms of the universal humanism that it proclaimed.

What is more, the key concept of the political, sovereign nation, so important in French Republican ideology, was also available for ready transformation into a weapon of the anti-imperialist struggle, providing the legitimacy for national liberation struggles. In both these cases, therefore, on the fronts of universal humanism and national sovereignty, the dominant discourse itself provided key concepts for its own subversion.

At the same time, it would be wrong to underestimate the input of ideas and concepts that owed their origins to non-European sources. Indeed, the concept of national liberation itself is not just a variant on the theme of nationalism, but an original development, which came into its own outside the European sphere.

In spite of this radically new development, the French Revolution remained a key source for the development of revolutionary thought throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This was not solely a European phenomenon. Indeed, the French Revolution and its ideas were to provide some of the ideological armoury for the waging of the anticolonial struggles themselves, going right back to the Revolutionary period. Moreover, the brief interlude of the Second Republic was to add a further dimension to the inspirational capacity of Revolutionary Republican discourse, through its symbolic importance as a constitutional model for other societies (and indeed for French Republicans) and, with the institution of universal manhood suffrage and the abolition of slavery, as the incarnation of French egalitarian and libertarian principles.

Thus, in spite of the contradictions within the French Republican discourse, as well as those to which colonial practice gave rise, it remained remarkably resilient as a source of inspiration, particularly for the colonised. In the 1920s and 1930s, it proved a key source for the embryonic anticolonialist nationalisms developing in the French colonies. One of numerous examples of this can be found in the account of a Tunisian poet, M'hamed Férid Ghazi, writing about the anticolonial movement in Tunisia in 1938 and stressing the key reference of the French Revolution for that struggle: 'It was time to act: to live in freedom or die! A century and a half after the French Revolution, its immortal rallying cry also belonged to us' (Ghazi 1956: 1356). He was fully aware of the ambiguous relationship that existed with France:

> The French Revolution took place a century and a half ago, but ours was still waiting to be carried out. We were determined to do it. For us, France was at one and the same time a tyranny that ruled us by force of bayonets, as well as the great ideals of liberty, human fraternity and social justice. Just like an open wound, we felt the pangs of the divorce between what we were taught and the reality to which we were subject and in which we had to live our lives – it was like a brazen challenge to the high ideals! Everything was so attractive in the books we read, but down on the street, nothing but horrors: the worst kind of atrocities, unprovoked harassment and abuse. Behind the gates of our school, the unforgettable Sadiki School, brotherhood and human kindness were the order of the day. Yet outside, there was nothing but the cold humiliation of systematic contempt. We were caught between the two. Torn

apart, but full of determination. One day, terrorism would bring about the liberation of us young people. Those who were ground down would rise up to face their torturers. They would respond to the humiliation with hatred. To oppression, with terror. And the infernal cycle would cast the shadow of the apocalypse to all four corners of the Maghreb. The tortured and tormented would see armed fellaghas coming to them in their dreams and spring back to life to the sound of their gunfire. They will haunt the plains and the villages. Dealing justice, they will cause the thieves and murderers with hands dripping with the blood of our martyrs to tremble. Nothing will be able to smash them. Should ten die, then soon one hundred will arise to replace them! Legions of fighters will spring up from the bruised earth to the cry of 'Freedom'! (Ghazi 1956: 1365)

However, history had not come to an end with the French Revolution. Not only did the fortunes of Republicanism wax and wane throughout the nineteenth century, but also the development of capitalism in Europe and the ensuing contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat had led to economic and political struggles that found their expression in the growth of socialist and communist ideas and movements, through which these struggles were articulated. These new ideas did not, of course, develop in a vacuum, but were built on the political aspects of Enlightenment ideology, adding an analysis and critique of the capitalist economy and class society. While this dissident ideology thus introduced fundamentally new notions, such as class difference and contradiction, as a necessary counterweight to the notions of abstract political equality, it nonetheless did not break utterly with the Enlightenment tradition.

This is particularly true in the retention and indeed further development of the idea of historical progress, in which humanity was moving to an ever higher stage of development. This was to lead to a complex position with regard to the nature of capitalism itself within this historical process, and, as a corollary, to that of capitalist imperialism.

These ambiguities are there implicitly in the whole range of anticapitalist ideology, which comes under the different headings of various types of socialism and communism. It is perhaps best discussed first in the very explicit form that it took in the work of Marx and Engels.

Marxism as Critique and Continuation of Enlightenment Discourse

While Marx and Engels developed a global critique of capitalism, prioritising its economic mode of operation, founded on exploitation and oppression, it is, at the same time, a fundamental tenet of their thought that capitalism, with all its faults and negative features, represents a progressive force and stage in human history. As they state in the *Communist Manifesto*:

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.
    The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to

all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors,' and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment.'

... It has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exoduses of nations and crusades.

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society ... Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind. (Marx and Engels (1848)/1970: 37–38)

Bourgeois capitalism nonetheless carried the seeds of its own destruction, through the working out of the contradictions that were inherent within it, as Marx tells us in the Preface to *The Critique of Political Economy*:

In broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production – antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from the social conditions of life of the individuals; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory of human society to a close. (Marx (1859)/1970: 182)

Or again in the words of the *Communist Manifesto*:

The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself.

But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons – the modern working class – the proletarians ...

The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of

> Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. (Marx and Engels (1848)/1970: 41, 46)

The perception of capitalism as a progressive force, albeit beset with contradictions, also extended to capitalist imperialism, which was seen as both a negative and a positive force, bringing into the historical process, defined as a progress towards ever higher stages of civilisation, those societies that had hitherto been outside history. This involved bringing them into the orbit of the global capitalist economy. Referring to India, in an article for the New York Daily Tribune of 8 August 1853 ('The Future Results of the British Rule in India'), Marx writes the following:

> The bourgeois period of modern history has to create the material basis of the new world – on the one hand the universal intercourse founded upon the mutual dependency of mankind, and the means of that intercourse; on the other hand the development of the productive powers of man and the transformation of material production into a scientific domination of natural agencies. Bourgeois industry and commerce create these material conditions of a new world in the same way as geological revolutions have created the surface of the earth. When a great social revolution shall have mastered the results of the bourgeois epoch, the market of the world and the modern powers of production, and subjected them to the common control of the most advanced peoples, then only will human progress cease to resemble that hideous pagan idol, who would not drink the nectar but from the skulls of the slain. (Marx and Engels (1959)/1975: 34–35)

 As we see, Marx and Engels describe this process in ambivalent terms, stressing the negative aspects involved in the forcible disruption of the economies and societies of other countries at the same time as they interpret this process as one that will bring 'barbarians' into the realm of civilisation. This is explicitly stated in the *Communist Manifesto*:

> The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.
>   ... Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilised

ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West.
(Marx and Engels (1848)/1970: 39)

Whilst the notion of civilisation is itself subject to their critique, there is no getting away from the fact that it is viewed as a higher stage in the historical process, in line with much of contemporary thinking on historical progress, such as that of Lewis H. Morgan, who built on evolutionary theory in his *Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery Through Barbarism to Civilisation* (1877), which was such an influence on Engels's *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Engels (1884)/1970).

It is clear that one of the main criteria that Marx uses to define the level a civilisation has reached is the distance a society has travelled away from purely natural processes and relations. The development of control over nature in the techniques of economic production and the degree of development of communications both figure as essential factors in determining the relative advance of some societies over others. He also considers that these more advanced peoples have a crucial, if unconscious, role in effecting progress as part of a universal, historical project for the entire human species, at the same time as he registers the inevitable downside of this project, in bringing destruction, violence and impoverishment in its wake.

Marx made this abundantly clear in his writings on India, as when he discusses the British role in bringing about a social revolution in India:

> Now, sickening as it must be to human feeling to witness those myriads of industrious patriarchal and inoffensive social organizations disorganized and dissolved into their units, thrown into a sea of woes, and their individual members losing at the same time their ancient form of civilization and their hereditary means of subsistence, we must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of suspicion, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. We must not forget the barbarian egotism which, concentrating on some miserable patch of land, had quietly witnessed the ruin of empires, the perpetration of unspeakable cruelties, the massacre of the population of large towns, with no other consideration bestowed upon them than on natural events, itself the helpless prey of any aggressor who deigned to notice it at all. We must not forget that this undignified, stagnatory, and vegetative life, that this passive sort of existence evoked on the other part, in contradistinction, wild, aimless, unbounded forces of destruction, and rendered murder itself a religious rite in Hindustan. We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances instead of elevating man to

be the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into never changing natural destiny, and thus brought about a brutalizing worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Hanuman, the monkey, and Sabbala, the cow.

England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about the revolution. (Marx and Engels, 1959/1975: 18–19)

The introduction of modern industry into India, via the railway system, will have the effect of 'dissolving the hereditary divisions of labour' and thus the caste system, which act as 'decisive impediments to Indian progress and power'. In doing so, the English bourgeoisie is laying down the 'material premises' for economic and social progress in India, whilst causing immeasurable misery to millions. 'Has the bourgeoisie ever done more? Has it ever effected a progress without dragging individuals and peoples through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation?' (Marx and Engels (1959)/1975: 33).

This is inherent in what Marx calls England's 'double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating – the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia,' (Marx and Engels (1959)/1975: 30) through the political unification of the country, aided by telegraphy and other means of communication and travel, the building of the Indian army, the free press, the institution of private property in land, the development of education and science. The negative aspects to be eliminated included a social system that, reified as a natural destiny, served as a bulwark of despotism, caste and slavery; the passivity of a vegetative state, in which human beings were subjugated to external forces and not in charge of their destinies; superstition and traditional obscurantism, which put people in thrall to nature and restricted the development of the human mind.

The net effect of the British intervention in India, therefore, is seen as the positive one of bringing India into the orbit of universal human history, from its previous position as a society outside history: 'Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history. What we call its history, is but the history of the successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society' (Marx and Engels (1959)/1975: 29).

Writing about the opium trade, Marx puts China into the same category of societies without history, though again this does not put its British adversary into a morally superior position, but rather the contrary.

While the semi-barbarian stood on the principle of morality, the civilized opposed the principle of pelf. That a giant empire, containing almost one-

third of the human race, vegetating in the teeth of time, insulated by the forced exclusion of general intercourse, and thus contriving to dupe itself with illusions of Celestial perfection – that such an empire should at last be overtaken by fate on occasion of a deadly duel, in which the representative of the antiquated world appears prompted by ethical motives, while the representative of overwhelming modern society fights for the privilege of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest markets – this, indeed, is a sort of tragical couplet, stranger than any poet would ever have dared to fancy. (Marx and Engels 1968: 211–12)

The notion of societies outside history comes to Marx and Engels, of course, from Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. Hegel is categorical about the status of Africa, in particular, as unhistorical:

We shall therefore leave Africa at this point, and it need not be mentioned again. For it is an unhistorical continent, with no movement or development of its own. And such events as have occurred in it – i.e. in its northern part – belong to the Asiatic and European Worlds. Carthage, while it lasted, represented an important phase; but as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered as a stage in the movement of the human spirit from east to west, but it has no part in the spirit of Africa. What we understand as Africa proper is that unhistorical and underdeveloped land which is still emmeshed in the natural spirit, and which had to be mentioned here before we cross the threshold of world history. (Hegel (1822–30)/1975: 190)

Marx and Engels allow greater scope than Hegel for the so-called non-historical societies to enter the world historical process, while, at the same time, not sharing the more positive view of Asia as part of the motor, indeed the origin, of universal development that appears in Hegel. The leading role of Europe is not in dispute. Moreover, if examples in Marx and Engels's writings relating to the progressive role of the French imperial endeavour are necessarily limited by its relatively undeveloped character at this stage, the capture of the Emir Abdelkader was nonetheless greeted with approval by Engels, who used the familiar justification of the necessity of imperialism for the global progress of civilisation, in an article in the English Chartist newspaper, the *Northern Star*, in 1848.

Upon the whole it is, in our opinion, very fortunate that the Arabian chief has been taken. The struggle of the Bedouins was a hopeless one, and though the manner in which brutal soldiers, like Bugeaud, have carried on the war is highly blameable, the conquest of Algeria is an important and fortunate fact for the progress of civilisation. The piracies of the Barbaresque states ... could not be put down but by the conquest of one of these states. And the conquest of Algeria has already forced the Beys of Tunis and

Tripoli, and even the Emperor of Morocco, to enter upon the road of civilisation. They were obliged to find other employment for their people than piracy, and other means of filling their exchequer than tributes paid to them by the smaller states of Europe. And if we may regret that the liberty of the Bedouins of the desert has been destroyed, we must not forget that these same Bedouins were a nation of robbers, – whose principal means of living consisted of making excursions either upon each other, or upon the settled villagers, taking what they found, slaughtering all those who resisted, and selling the remaining prisoners as slaves. All these nations of free barbarians look very proud, noble and glorious at a distance, but only come near them and you will find that they, as well as the more civilised nations, are ruled by the lust of gain, and only employ ruder and more cruel means. And after all, the modern bourgeois, with civilisation, industry, order, and at least relative enlightenment following him, is preferable to the feudal lord or to the marauding robber, with the barbarian state of society to which they belong. (Engels (1848)/1976: 471)

Yet, ten years later, in his entry on 'Algeria' for the *New American Cyclopaedia*, Engels was to give greater prominence to the brutality and bloodshed of the French military conquest and occupation of Algeria, with none of the admiration that he had been wont to express for European organisation in his writing on the British army, particularly at the time of the Indian uprising of 1857 (Marx and Engels 1968: 156–61).

The considerable writings of both Marx and Engels on issues relating to imperialism and colonialism are varied in scope and present a more extensive range of positions, sometimes ostensibly contradictory ones, than it has been possible to go into here. Summing up, however, it can probably be said that the positive effects of capitalist imperialism have to be seen in the context of the global, universal progress of humankind, rather more than on particular colonised societies. Indeed, the advantages of capitalist imperialism to the subject peoples themselves are presented as double-edged and are quite likely to entail considerable suffering. Nonetheless, the movement towards a higher stage of history is not seen as a mere option, but a necessary step for all societies to take if humanity as a whole is to move forward.

The use of Marxist tools of analysis and critique to further the cause of anti-imperialist struggles has thus been beset by the tensions which this dual position has tended to provoke. These tensions have been exacerbated by the actual process of history, involving societies at very different levels of development and the real processes brought about by imperialism, which did not always or necessarily lead to the economic and social progress that Marx and Engels had envisaged on the general plane of human history. Indeed, in many cases, and this too is recognised by them, they led to real regression in concrete terms, with the destruction of economic resources, including particular industries, such as textiles in India, irrigation facilities and other public works, and a reversal of social progress, with, in some cases, the destruction of embryonic, home-grown capitalist developments that had already been taking place before the imperial conquests.

On the one hand, anti-imperialist movements have seized on the Marxist theorisation of the processes of social transformation and applied it as an aid in their revolutionary struggles. At the same time, elements of Marxist thought have also been used to shore up the position of European and other advanced capitalist societies at the supposed vanguard of historical development. When used in this way, it is not surprising that Marxism has often been the object of critique by those who see it contaminated by a fundamental Eurocentrism, in which the division between advanced, mainly European, societies and backward, mainly non-European, societies has been perpetuated.

It is certainly true that, when Marx talks about the social revolution in Asia, what he has in mind is the move to the bourgeois, capitalist stage of history. Nonetheless, there are also references to the possibility of socialism in Asia. Commenting in 1850 on the claims of a German missionary by the name of Gützlaff that the Chinese were on the verge of revolution and preaching ideas akin to socialism, Marx and Engels have this to say:

> Chinese socialism may stand in the same relation to the European variety as Chinese philosophy stands to the Hegelian. Yet it is a gratifying fact that the bales of calico of the English bourgeoisie have in eight years brought the oldest and most imperturbable empire on earth to the threshold of a social upheaval, one which will in any case hold most significant consequences for civilization. When in their imminent flight across Asia our European reactionaries will ultimately arrive at the Wall of China, at the gates that lead to the stronghold of arch-reaction and arch-conservatism, who knows if they will not find there the inscription: République Chinoise, Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité. (Marx and Engels, 'First International Review', *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 31 January 1850, in Marx and Engels 1968: 17–18)

This passage clearly envisages something more akin to a radical bourgeois revolution than a socialist one. What is more, there is a clear expectation that any such bourgeois nationalist revolution in China, as in India, would bring about the 'explosion of the long-prepared general crisis' in Britain and Europe (Marx, 'Revolution in China and in Europe', in Marx and Engels 1968: 21–23).

Some years later, in 1882, Engels makes this thinking explicit in a letter to Kautsky, where he spells out his view on colonial policy. Here he states that, while in his view the settler colonies will undoubtedly become independent, those colonies that are 'inhabited by a native population' and are 'simply subjugated' (into which category he includes Algeria) 'must be taken over for the time being by the [metropolitan] proletariat and led as rapidly as possible towards independence'. However, it is likely that at least some of the latter will have a revolution, by which he clearly means a bourgeois national revolution, which will be 'the best thing *for us*'. Although it is likely that they will proceed to follow the example of the by then successful European and North American proletariats, he declines to speculate on the processes by which they will proceed to a socialist transformation:

> Once Europe is reorganised, and North America, that will furnish such colossal power and such an example that the semi-civilised countries will of themselves follow in their wake; economic needs, if anything, will see to that. But as to what social and political phases these countries will then have to pass through before they likewise arrive at socialist organisation, I think we today can advance only rather idle hypotheses. (Engels (1882)/1970: 678)

Lenin's Theory of Imperialism

Lenin's contribution to the theory of imperialism was crucial in the working out of some of the tensions implicit in the thinking of Marx and Engels on imperialism. This may be due in no small measure to the fact that he was working out his theory in the context of Russia, which at the beginning of the twentieth century was positioned at the cusp of the divide between the advanced capitalist imperialist societies of Europe, especially Western Europe, and the non-metropolitan, non-European countries at the receiving end of imperialism.

Lenin played an important role in developing the theory of capitalism as a global process, in which imperialism, as he defined it, is but the latest stage in its development. This definition of imperialism was characterised by its link to fundamental changes in the economic nature of capitalism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and into the early part of the twentieth, which led to political changes too. The changes that differentiated this stage of capitalism were summed up in the five key features that he enumerates as follows:

> 1) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; 2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this 'finance capital', of a financial oligarchy; 3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance; 4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves, and 5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed. (Lenin (1917b)/1970: 737)

This analytical part of his theory fits readily with earlier Marxist theories of capitalism as a global historical process, although it also marks a real departure, in restricting the definition of imperialism to a particular phase in global capitalism, linked exclusively to the export of capital.

However, there is a further aspect to Lenin's theory that we need to highlight here: the theory of unequal development (Lenin (1917b)/1970).[2] This theory was to play an important part in explaining the complexity of the development processes of capitalist imperialism and introducing important factors of differentiation into what had tended to be viewed as a unilinear progress through stages. In stressing that capitalism developed at different rates and in different forms, depending on the

specific concrete conditions that applied to different societies, Lenin set out the framework for a theory that could be more readily applicable to other societies that fell outside the parameters of Western European capitalism, as well as highlighting the divisions between the imperialist countries themselves. Not least, it was to provide a foundation for the analysis of the differentiation of the working class itself and the unequal incidence of exploitation and oppression to which different sectors were exposed, leading to the recognition of the existence of subproletarian groups, both within metropolitan societies and on the world plane. All of these considerations were to have profound implications for the future of both the theory and the practice of anti-imperialist struggles.

Moreover, the crucial new elements that he laid bare invalidated any previous historicist optimism that some Marxists might have had: that the development of capitalism would of itself tend to lead to a higher, more progressive type of society, socialist and then communist, through a progressive evolution, albeit worked out through contradiction and conflict. For, in Lenin's theory, imperialism represented capitalism in its regressive phase, in which the non-productive, parasitical elements had become dominant in the metropolitan heartlands themselves. The super-profits derived from imperialism had given the metropolitan economies at least a temporary respite from the innate tendencies to crisis. Moreover, the parasitical nature of the metropolitan imperialist economies was not simply a feature of the economy; it had also had a profound effect on the metropolitan working-class movements, corrupting them through economic benefits and ideological co-optation into the system and thus leading to a stagnation in their aptitude to bring about social change (Lenin (1917b)/1970: 745–52).

One of the corollaries of Lenin's theory was that the vanguard of social transformation was displaced from the most advanced sectors of the most advanced capitalist societies. Thereafter, he would argue that the socialist revolution would occur not at the point of highest development, but at the weakest link in the chain of the global capitalist system (Lenin (1923)/1970: 767–70).[3] This was not only to provide a theoretical foundation for the Bolshevik Revolution, but also to have a profound impact on the theory and practice of anti-imperialist struggles, through the legitimising of the struggles of the weakest, rather than the strongest.

It would, however, be wrong to conclude that this lesson was accepted by the whole of the socialist/communist movement. The belief in the inherent right to the leadership of the struggle by the most economically advanced continued to form part of the ideological baggage of socialists and communists both in Europe and beyond. Louis Althusser, for instance, stressed the leading role of the most advanced sector of 'productive' workers in his *Réponse à John Lewis* (Althusser 1973b: 25–26) and dismissed any role for the subproletariat as a force for change in his correspondence with Maria-Antonietta Macciocchi (Althusser 1973a: 27–28, 52, 297). This issue was to provoke tensions right into the modern period.

These tensions were aggravated by a further set of contradictions, which derived from the clash between, on the one hand, the development of new forms of nationalism, as with Lenin's own articulation of the right of nations to self-

determination (Lenin (1914)/1970: 595–647), and, on the other hand, the internationalism promoted by the socialist and communist movement. The impact of these movements created the basis for an internationalist approach to the struggle, which was viewed as a global struggle, in which identity of class interest and international class solidarity counted for more than national difference. Whilst there is no doubt that internationalism could provide welcome support for those fighting against imperialism, nonetheless, it could also prove to be at odds with their aims and objectives, especially when applied in a unilateralist way by the European Left. In this approach, the struggle against imperialism was, to a greater or lesser extent, subsumed into the international class struggle. Liberation would occur with the global transformation of capitalism into socialism, in which the colonised would play their role as part of the international proletariat. The implications were often that this would only happen in due course; the needs of the colonised were not prioritised.

The Ambiguities of the French Inheritance – Aimé Césaire

This chapter will end with an initial discussion of some of the tensions provoked by this scenario in the career and thought of a politician and writer who was not only inspired by the attractions of the French Republican discourse and the international communist movement but also compelled to react against both. Aimé Césaire's critique of the false universalism of the Republican and communist discourse and, at best, the hypocrisy and, at worst, the cynicism of its application to the colonial sphere led to his espousal of the notion of *négritude* from the 1930s and ultimately to his departure from the Communist Party in 1956.

We have to look no further than the title page of Césaire's version of Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*, published as *Une Tempête* in 1969, to encounter a glaring example of some of the contradictions at work.

In a sentence giving a short résumé of Césaire's biography, we read that he is a key figure in Caribbean political debates because of his position as Mayor and Parliamentary Deputy for Fort-de-France in Martinique – a position he had occupied 'since the Liberation'. The Liberation in question is, of course, the 1944 liberation of metropolitan France; Martinique remains an Overseas Department of France (DOM). Yet, this sentence is written, to all appearances, quite without irony. No one expects the reader to raise the question: whose liberation is referred to here? It is assumed that the particular liberation of France at the end of the Second World War is a universal reference point.

This is all the more remarkable, since not only does Martinique remain a colony of France, but the play in question has liberty as its major theme. It is all about the freedom that is still to be achieved, how that freedom is to be gained and how the very notion of freedom is inseparable from the founding event of modern French history, the French Revolution, and the modernist discourse associated with it.

We do not need to dwell at any greater length on the reference to the Liberation in this brief note on Césaire's life. However, it would be difficult to ignore the founding importance of the Revolution, as it underpins the discourse of liberty and

liberation, on the one hand, and the rationalisation of the colonial enterprise, on the other. As we have already seen, a key distinguishing feature of the *mission civilisatrice*, French-style, was the duty to spread the universal values of the Enlightenment to the benighted regions of the globe, including the Rights of Man and, in particular, the rights to knowledge and science. The true colonial hero was thus seen as the man of reason, shedding the light of civilisation on to the darkness and obscurantism of primitive barbarism, not so much converting the heathen to the one and only true faith, but assisting their passage into the modern world of rational thought and scientific progress.

There is no doubt that this type of rationalisation carried a considerable amount of conviction and ideological weight. Yet it was flawed by an inherent contradiction – between the universalism it sought to convey and the need to maintain the fundamental difference of the colonial Other. The justification of the civilising mission could only last as long as the basic opposition remained between the civilised parties, on the one hand, and the primitive barbarians, on the other. If the process of bringing civilisation to the natives was too successful, then the whole *raison d'être* of the empire would be gone.

This Machiavellian reasoning could provide the basis of a cynical explanation of the limitations of colonial educational policy, which, in practice, only permitted a small elite group to attain the highest level of educational qualifications and thus become assimilated to the ranks of the civilised. Césaire, however, does not leave it at that rather simplistic level of argument. The civilising mission is doomed to failure, but not through any lack of will on the colonisers' part to put it into effect or any reluctance to practise what they preach. The trouble with the processes involved in colonisation and imperial domination is that, far from bringing about the civilisation of the barbarian, their effect is rather to bring about the de-civilisation of the colonisers themselves, turning them into primitive brutes. For Césaire, there is a direct line between the brutality of imperialism in the colonies and the fruit that it bears on the European continent itself, with the emergence of fascism and Nazism and the transformation of some of the most 'civilised' nations in Europe into lands where the ideology of blood, brute force and racial power could hold sway. Hitler is differentiated from his imperialist precursors, not by the scale of his crimes, but by the fact that his victims are themselves Europeans (Césaire (1955)/1970: 10–11). From this perspective, the Liberation is likely to appear in a very different light.

Yet, as we have seen, the contradictions were already present at the time of the French Revolution and, as Césaire claimed in his *Discourse upon Colonialism* two centuries later, European (or Western) civilisation, as shaped by two centuries of bourgeois rule, has still not been able to solve the two main problems that were caused by its birth: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem (Césaire (1955)/1970: 5). Or, in other words:

Anyone who expected the abolition of slavery to occur as a spontaneous gesture on the part of the French bourgeoisie, on the grounds that this abolition was a logical consequence of the Revolution and more specifically

> of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, was labouring under an illusion, since the bourgeoisie had only carried out their own historical purpose, i.e. the bourgeois revolution itself, when goaded and prodded into action by the armed revolt of the people. (Césaire (1961)/1981: 171)

Class conflict in France was not eliminated by the Revolution; it merely changed its form. Thus, the Revolution soon spawned its ideological progeny – socialism, then Marxism – to come to terms with the contradictions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Similarly, the Revolution failed to bring about even a formal end to the domination of men over women; the Declaration of the Rights of Man remained the Declaration of the Rights of Men.

This is not to say that these questions were not raised during the Revolutionary period. As we have seen, there were those prepared to fight, albeit unsuccessfully, on behalf of the proletariat, as there were fighters for women's equality with men. In the same way, the problem of the rights of the colonised, enslaved peoples was raised at the very outset of the Revolutionary process. As Césaire saw it, this issue went beyond the formal recognition, or denial, of the right of individuals to equality. It concerned the recognition of the rights of nations and the freedom of nations to decide their own destiny. In the universalising euphoria of the Revolution, the national question seems to have been almost totally neglected and the foundations were laid for the ongoing contradiction between the universal Rights of Man and the rights of particular nations.

This seemed to be the case even for the Americans, who had nonetheless just waged a war for their own national liberation. Césaire quotes from the speech of the leader of a delegation of 'free Americans', waxing lyrical in the Convention, in praise of the universal mission of the French nation to bring all the peoples of the world as one people under its single banner of liberty.[4]

Amongst the French Revolutionary leaders, only Marat is credited by Césaire with the insight to recognise the national implications of the colonial question, as it was raised at the time, and to declare the right of the colonies to secede.[5] Indeed, he quotes Marat writing in *L'Ami du Peuple* in 1791 that it would be 'absurd and senseless for a people to govern itself through laws emanating from a legislative body based 2,000 leagues away' and claiming that the only 'foolishness committed by the inhabitants of our colonies' was 'agreeing to send députés to the French National Assembly', although he claims that only the white colonists were guilty of such foolishness (Césaire (1961)/1981: 189–90).[6] Yet Césaire also acknowledged that one of the achievements of the Revolution was to be the formal declaration in 1795 of the inalienable sovereign rights of all nations to freedom and independence, whatever the size of their population or territory.[7] The problem was in its application, as well as in the interpretation of the declaration. Césaire remained profoundly unconvinced of its genuine universalism. In his view, it was inconceivable that the authors of the declaration were thinking of the rights of the colonised peoples and in particular the blacks; their universalism was, in fact, limited to the European peoples alone and, as such, was a 'false universalism'.[8]

Whatever the intentions of the legislators at that time, it is with the later expansion of empire under the Third Republic at the end of the nineteenth century and the subjection of the colonial peoples in the name of liberty, equality and fraternity that the contradictions implicit in universalist ideology were to come to the fore in a manner that left no room for doubt. Moreover, neither the anticolonial struggles nor the subsequent wholesale decolonisation of the 1960s has managed to lay this problem to rest. The development of the universal ideology of the international socialist and communist movement likewise simply meant a change in the form of the contradiction. When the metropolitan socialists and communists were not simply reproducing the colonial logic of empire, their ideology and organisational structures either ignored the anticolonial struggles or made them subservient to the universal goals of the international working class: the replacement of world capitalism by a worldwide socialism or communism.

With the establishment of the Comintern in 1919 and particularly after the adoption of the twenty-one conditions of affiliation to the Third International in 1920 (Kriegel 1964; Fauvet 1965), the subordination of the interests of each national party to the wider international strategy was completed. This applied not only to the different parties in Europe and America, but also to the parties which were to establish themselves in the colonies. The latter came not only under the ultimate jurisdiction of the international communist movement, represented in the Comintern, but also under the direct control of the communist party of the relevant metropolis. Indeed, the European communist parties perpetuated colonial relations throughout the Stalinist period, through the insistence that all communist organisations set up in the colonies were regarded as offshoots of the metropolitan parties and thus under the control of the party in the relevant 'mother country'.

Thus, in the French colonies, the locally based communists were under the wing and authority of the French Communist Party (PCF), even if the latter was itself subservient to the Comintern and Moscow. This was to have particular consequences for the PCA (the Algerian Communist Party), for instance, and its relationship to the national struggle. Under these circumstances, the PCF was itself deeply marked by colonialist attitudes and ideology, even when it was engaging in anticolonialist activity, as Césaire was not slow to point out, in his open letter to Maurice Thorez, when he broke from the Party (Césaire 1957: 13).[9]

His own response was to develop the concept of *négritude* to highlight the specificity of the situation and struggle of black people within the context of a universal liberation movement. He would have no truck with what he describes as 'false universalism', in other words, an empty abstraction with no real content. What he would accept was a universalism made up of the sum of all existing particularisms, a universalism in which each particular culture is explored in all its depth and richness, abandoning nothing of its own character, but contributing to the overall richness and variety of the whole (Césaire 1957: 15). What he had in mind was not an abstract universalism but the universal concrete.

We may relate this to Marx and Engels's critique in *The Holy Family*, or Critique of *Critical Criticism*, of the neo-Hegelians' abstraction of the universal ideal fruit,

progenitor of all particular fruit. What interested Césaire was not any ideal common essence, or common denominator of 'fruit-ness', the ideal fruit, in abstraction from all apples, pears, oranges or whatever, existing in the real world, but the rich diversity of all these particular fruit, which together makes up the synthetic concept of 'fruit'. Or, as Marx and Engels put it:

> Thus '*the* Fruit' is no longer an empty undifferentiated unity: it is oneness as allness, as '*totality*' of fruits, which constitute an '*organically linked series of members*'. In every member of that series 'the Fruit' gives itself a more developed, more explicit existence, until finally, as the '*summary*' of all fruits, it is at the same time the living *unity* which contains all those fruits dissolved in itself just as it produces them from within itself, just as, for instance, all the limbs of the body are constantly dissolved in and constantly produced out of the blood. (Marx and Engels (1844)/1975: 69–70)

The same with human beings: what made up the universality of the human race was not some ideal, abstract, monolithic essence which all have in common, but the real, concrete particularities of human beings in all their pluralistic diversity and specificity.

This was not an uncontroversial position, implying, as it did, the demystification of the classic rationalist universalism of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, revealing it for the real, historically situated particularism, which it actually was when imposed on others as the triumphant and triumphalist ideology of the French Republican state. Paradoxically, this fact was often recognised implicitly or explicitly by those who proclaimed the universal mission of France. Indeed, one of Césaire's targets in the *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Yves Florenne of *Le Monde*, is quoted by him, writing: 'It is not by losing herself, merging her blood and spirit in the universe of humanity that France will achieve universality; it is by remaining herself' (Césaire (1955)/1970: 45).

The European intellectual legacy remains thus, in terms of its content, a source of paradox and mystification, as well as a source of inspiration for those attempting to struggle against imperial domination. We should not leave this theme behind before stressing that, where it was influential, it was not only because of or even, at times, in spite of its content, but also because of the theory and practice of a particular form of struggle, the notion of Revolution itself. Theorisations of the American and French Revolutions, not to mention the English Revolution that preceded them and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, provided the legitimacy for the total political and social upheavals that they produced, but also for the subsequent political systems that emerged. They also played an exemplary role, in both theoretical and practical terms, for those seeking to engage in appropriate forms of struggle against imperialism. Thus, irrespective of the precise economic, political and social content of the revolutionary manifestos, the overriding impact was to show to the oppressed that change – fundamental, totalising change – was possible.

Notes

1. The French commonly refer to mainland, metropolitan France as the Hexagon.
2. See also Lenin (1915a)/1970: 664; (1919)/1977: 308.
3. On these issues, see Westoby 1989: 163–72.
4. '[Il] rappelle aux représentants qu'ils ont été appelés pour faire le bonheur d'une grande nation, pour jeter les fondements de la liberté du monde et pour faire que de tous les peuples il n'y en ait plus qu'un', official record of the Convention session of 4 June 1793 (quoted by Césaire in (1961)/1981: 187).
5. je ne vois qu'un homme de l'époque à avoir assumé l'anticolonialisme dans toutes ses exigences, tenant sous un seul regard le double aspect du problème colonial, son aspect social comme son aspect national. Et c'est Marat. Un seul homme à avoir proclamé le droit des colonies à la sécession. Et c'est Marat.

   Plus exactement, ainsi qu'on peut le lire dans le numéro 624 de *L'Ami du Peuple, le droit qu'ont les colonies de secouer le joug tyrannique de la métropole.* (*L'Ami du Peuple,* 12 décembre 1791). (Césaire (1961)/1981: 188).

   Césaire also credits Marat with a recognition of the persistence of class inequality in the French Revolution.
6. Yet, ironically, Césaire himself had accepted this as the way forward for Martinique, most notably at the time of its *départementalisation* in 1946.
7. La déclaration des droits de 1795, toute thermidorienne pourtant, est formelle: les peuples sont respectivement indépendants et souverains, quel que soit le nombre des individus qui les composent et l'étendue du territoire qu'ils occupent; cette souraineté est inaliénable. Chaque peuple a le droit d'organiser et de changer les formes de son gouvernement. Les entreprises contre la liberté d'un peuple sont un attentat contre les autres peuples. (Césaire (1961)/1981: 343).
8. Sans doute le droit était-il décrété; mais encore fallait-il l'appliquer aux peuples. Et à quels peuples? Aux peuples d'Europe? A tous les peuples? Aux peuples coloniaux? Le faux universalisme nous a habitués à tant de faux-fuyants, les droits de l'homme se sont si souvent rétrécis à n'être que les droits de l'homme européen, que la question n'est pas superflue. Il est hors d'apparence qu'en proclamant le droit de l'homme à la *nation*, le droit des peuples à la patrie, le législateur français ait pensé aux colonies. Sans apparence aucune qu'il ait pensé aux peuples noirs. On peut même assurer qu'il n'est pas un révolutionnaire français qui ait songé qu'un jour les nègres formeraient un état. (Césaire (1961)/1981: 343).
9. See also Joly 1991.

Chapter 3
Race and Resistance

The account so far of some of the key features of imperialist discourse would seem to suggest that only one of the sides involved was able to articulate their perception of the relation. It is indeed true that the whole weight of the imperial state machine and the particular practices and messages of its ideologues were geared to produce a message or messages that reflected and bolstered the dominance of the Western imperialists. Often, this meant that the 'natives' were simply silenced, by use of a variety of means, ranging from outright physical repression, through censorship of different types, to a range of methods of co-optation into the ideological realm of their colonial masters. In addition to these sustained and deliberate efforts to deprive the colonised of their voice, there were other more subtle ways of achieving the same result. However it was done, the silencing of the natives was an inherent corollary of the logic of maintaining colonial rule.

Yet the domination and hegemony of imperialism were never absolute. In addition to ongoing direct resistance to imperial rule, there was also the survival of elements of former modes of production. There were also vestiges, sometimes substantial, of previous forms of discourse and culture, as well as the emergence of new counter-discourses, which increasingly came into being to challenge the imperialists' prerogatives and right to rule. Expressing themselves in any possible format, including newspaper journalism, political speeches and pamphlets, literature, songs, legal challenges and other forms, these would also take the form of developed theories, borrowing in some cases from the intellectual resources of the oppressor country.

We have seen that the revolt of the Black Jacobins of Saint-Domingue was bolstered by the ideas in which the French Revolution was being fought out, as well as drawing on other, equally important, strands of non-European origin, including the practices and beliefs known as voodoo, which formed the web of ideas and practices through which the revolt expressed itself. However, resistance was not a new phenomenon. Resistance to attack and invasion and, subsequently, revolt against the occupying forces and the condition of slavery were an ongoing feature of the imperialist experience.

In the immediate aftermath of the invasion of Algeria by the French in 1830, fierce resistance by Algerian tribal warriors was waged from the beginning, under the

leadership of the totemic figure of the Emir Abdelkader, who still carries a tremendous symbolic power for his significance to Algerian nationhood even today. He was a spiritual as well as a military leader, a *Sufi* disciple of Ibn Arabi, and drew on Islam as a powerful mobilising force. Although Abdelkader surrendered to the Duc d'Aumale in 1847 and was imprisoned in France, before ending his days in exile in Damascus, the resistance was not eliminated but continued in a variety of forms, some under the surface (Djebar 1985), until the war of liberation brought independence in 1962.

In Morocco in the 1920s, a determined and initially successful resistance was put up against both the Spanish and the French by Abd el-Krim in the Rif War, until his deportation in 1927. In the French West and Central African territories, such as Senegal, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast and Guinea, there was strong resistance to French colonialism. This resistance was particularly determined where there was a predominance of concessionary companies in control, subjecting the colonised to brutal treatment and forced labour (Londres (1929)/1998; Suret-Canale 2001). The Kongo-Wara War, which lasted from 1928 to 1935 in the colony formerly named Oubangui-Chari (now Central African Republic), is one example of such resistance. Resistance in Madagascar was met with savage repression in 1947. There was also strong resistance in Asia. The French occupation of Indochina was met with uninterrupted resistance from its beginnings in the nineteenth century.

The sources of inspiration for these expressions of resistance were multiple. In addition to the spontaneous gut reaction of revolt against conquest and brutality, the articulation of revolt in terms of ideas and ideology drew on a range of thought and belief systems, linked to a diverse set of experiences and cultures. These currents developed in new directions, as a result of experience and cross-fertilisation with other influences throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There is no doubt that European socialism and communism developed a powerful attraction for those outside Europe, who were looking for tools of analysis of their oppression and strategies for their liberation. This was perhaps most notable in the case of Indochina, where the Vietnamese resistance, culminating in the declaration of independence in 1945, was very largely inspired by Marxist ideas, though it has to be said that, although leaders such as Ho Chi Minh spent time in France in their youth, these were mostly filtered through their Chinese and Soviet versions. If the Vietnam struggle, both against the French and then against the Americans, was fully integrated into the international communist movement and the wider international Left, it nonetheless retained a specifically Asian dimension. In other instances, socialist ideas were almost always even more clearly mixed in with, or set alongside, others that owed their origins to other sources.

Moreover, as the Black Jacobins had soon been confronted with the limitations of the humanism of the French Revolutionary project, so too did subsequent generations of the colonised and enslaved come to see the inadequacy of universal communism alone, as it was articulated in practice, and looked to alternative, or complementary, ideas through which to articulate their experience and struggle for freedom.

Although it is possible to tease out the elements of the different discourses and classify them according to their European or non-European sources, the fact is that, as an almost inevitable by-product of the processes of capitalist imperialism, these elements were in a close interrelationship and fed off each other to a large extent. There were a number of historical factors that gave an impetus to this cross-fertilisation, amongst which the involvement of troops from the colonies in both world wars, alongside, if not on a par with, metropolitan French soldiers, was highly significant in raising awareness of the predicament of the colonised and the possibility of struggle (Miller 1999). This awareness was heightened even further when the troops returned home to share their consciousness of their own humiliation and ill-treatment, but also to bring home the new ideas they had encountered regarding what struggle could and should be. These processes of exposure to and dissemination of European ideologies of struggle were reinforced by the increased migration of workers, students and intellectuals from the colonies to metropolitan France, which was given such a boost by the First World War. The coming together of people from Indochina, Africa and the Caribbean provided fertile conditions for the development of an anticolonial movement with an international dimension. It was enormously influential in building a common anticolonial consciousness, inspired by the ideas of the Marxist Left, but also developing its own concepts of analysis and struggle.

The 1920s were a time when, as well as intellectuals with Marxist and socialist ideas, such as Ho Chi Minh, radical, proletarian anticolonialist movements were being developed by Africans in Paris, such as Lamine Senghor and Tovalou Houénou (Miller 1999). Their voices were already raised in support of the specificity of the struggles of the colonised, particularly those of African origin, who had to endure the additional burdens of extreme exploitation and racism. Their ideas were expressed in newspapers such as *La Voix des Nègres*, *La Race Nègre* and *Le Cri des Nègres*, which acted as organs for debating questions of politics and strategy, but also cultural issues relating to self-identity, language and terminology. The Negritude movement, associated with Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas and many others in the 1930s, further developed this cultural dimension and built on contacts and connections that had already been made with Parisian intellectuals and artists, such as the surrealists, particularly in the opposition to the Colonial Exhibition of 1931, organised by Lyautey. This is reflected in the work of Senegalese writer Ousmane Socé Diop, who collaborated with Césaire, Damas and Senghor on the student newspaper, *L'Etudiant noir*. His *Mirages de Paris* (Socé 1937) deals with the perceptions of Africans based in Paris when they were confronted with the depictions and representations of Africans at the Exhibition.

What was at issue here was the notion of 'difference' and how this was defined. Class was certainly one signifier of difference in a class society, but one that had proved inadequate to explain the situation of the colonised African, who had to deal with the extra dimension of exploitation and oppression, rationalised, overtly or covertly, on the grounds of racial difference. Negritude developed as a movement with the aim of proclaiming this difference as a positive attribute, glorifying in

blackness and using race itself to turn the tables on the racist oppressors. Thus, while the passage via the French Communist Party was practically de rigueur for those developing anticolonial struggles, the unidimensional focus on class as the sole tool of analysis and the founding principle of the struggle was rejected to a greater or lesser extent by those associated with the Negritude movement. Their inspiration came from elsewhere, but as much from American-based movements, such as the Harlem Renaissance and other struggles against racial oppression (Dewitte 1985), as their own African roots. Césaire, in particular, built on the work of the Martiniquan group, *Légitime Défense*, associated with Etienne Lero, as well as taking inspiration from the black American W.E.B. Du Bois.

Sometimes the interrelationship with the communist movement was conceptualised as part of a historical dialectic, in which, for instance, Negritude constituted a moment of essential opposition to an abstract universalism, before being re-synthesised into a fully concrete universal. This diachronic model was by no means the only form of interaction envisaged and, at times, the synchronic notion of a more complex web of reciprocal and countervailing influences would be more appropriate. These two models could be combined in the thought of the same individual or movement.

We shall now turn our attention to some of these non-European counter-discourses, and their relationship and evolution in respect of the European ideas with which they interacted. These have not been restricted to the political sphere. Indeed, their development and expression has often taken place in the cultural domain. In the literary sphere, for instance, one of the key sites of confrontation for European and non-European ideas of the colonised or enslaved Other has involved the re-creation and reworking of the Shakespearean figure of Caliban. The following section explores the dynamics of this confrontation, through a discussion of Aimé Césaire's version of Shakespeare's *Tempest, Une Tempête* (1969) to which allusion has already been made. Césaire is not the only non-European writer to have attempted a rewriting of the Tempest. For instance, there has recently been the Creole version by the Mauritian writer Dev Virahsawmy, which goes under the title, *Toufann*, and has been translated into English and was performed in London in 1999 (Virahsawmy 1991).

The Myth of Caliban

Unlike Shakespeare's original text, Césaire's version is resolutely modernist in scope, in which the primary reference point is the Enlightenment discourse that underpinned the French Revolution. As we have seen, the ideological legacy of the French Revolution was not without its contradictions. However, this was not merely of historical interest to Césaire. In 1969, when he wrote his version of the *Tempest*, his inspiration came from the topical reality of the black liberation struggles, which were then at their height in the United States, with a resonance in other countries with black populations.[1] This is not, however, a play about the United States. We are left in no doubt that the island in question is clearly located in the Caribbean, thus breaking with the indeterminate location of Shakespeare's original and explicitly

linking the subject of the play to Césaire's own experience in Martinique and to the struggle for black liberation worldwide.

Why, then, did he choose to deal with this subject in this particular way, through a rewriting of the Shakespearean text?

In an earlier play, *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* (1963), Césaire had used the historical framework of the events that took place in post-independence Haiti at the beginning of the nineteenth century to raise contemporary problems and issues confronting African countries on the threshold of their own independence.[2] It seems that he is using a similar technique here to engage with contemporary political debates, except that the overall framework is provided by the literary text *The Tempest*.

Shakespeare's *Tempest* evokes the power of the word to create a complete theatrical universe, where the imagination reigns supreme. In this magical world, human beings as well as the elemental forces of nature are controlled through knowledge of the powers of the occult, which are unleashed through the incantatory might of the word. Thus, the writer can summon up and control the spirit world of his imagination through his text. Should he choose to do so, he may also abdicate from his creative endeavours, like Prospero, who consigns his book to the waves and thus gives up his magic powers (*The Tempest*, Act V, Scene i). Indeed, *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's own parting gift to the theatre; he uses the Epilogue to say his own farewell to the stage, even though he may then have gone on to write *Henry VIII*. In leaving, he gives up his power to create a magical world out of his imagination, albeit a dream world, which is a metaphor for the brief passage of each human life on earth.

> *We are such stuff*
> *As dreams are made on, and our little life*
> *Is rounded with a sleep* (Act IV, Scene i)[3]

In short, what Shakespeare believed to be his swansong text could not appear further removed from the political concerns of Aimé Césaire in 1969 and his understanding of the material reality. Yet, in Césaire's text too, it is a question of the power of the word, not so much in the general sense, but in the particular shape and form of the discourses pertaining to French Republican ideology. The tempest itself has become transformed into a metaphor of the Revolution, thus allowing Césaire to explore the contradictory dialectic at play between the various ideological strands that form part of its legacy and still impinge on the liberation struggles in the French colonial and postcolonial context.

What appears to be clear is that Césaire did not go directly to Shakespeare's text. It seems that he approached Shakespeare by way of a reading of Ernest Renan and, in particular, his 'philosophical drama' of 1878, *Caliban, suite de* La Tempête *de Shakespeare*.[4] Renan was an unlikely intermediary, whose writings date from the period of mid-nineteenth-century French imperial expansionism; indeed, Edward Said traces the origins of the phenomenon of orientalism to the work of Renan, whom he characterises as a 'realistic racist' (Said 1978: 6, 170).[5] He had already made his appearance in Césaire's *oeuvre*, albeit as a target for criticism in the *Discours*

sur le colonialisme. In this essay, Césaire had made a point of comparing Renan's ideas with those of Hitler (Césaire (1955)/1970: 12).

According to Roger Toumson, Césaire's interest in Renan's play was likely to have been aroused by the racial overtones the latter had given to the master-slave dialectic, in line with his ideas on the inequality and hierarchy of the races, in which France owed its position to the superior racial composition of the French nation. Not only was Caliban, as a Negro, assigned to an inferior race, he also represented the people, who overthrow Prospero's civilised aristocratic regime in a display of barbarism and ingratitude upon the return to Milan (Toumson 1981: 576–81). Clearly, Césaire would not have had any sympathy with the ideas expressed in Renan's text, with the sole exception of his anticlericalism. This may explain the responsibility which Césaire attibutes to the Inquisition for Prospero's exile (Toumson 1981: 615–17).

He is, however, able to extract from Renan's text the tools that he needs to deconstruct the rhetoric of French Republican discourse. Thus he is able to demonstrate to what extent the Republican conception of the nation as the political union of equal citizens has been penetrated by the genetic variant espoused by Renan, in which the nation is linked to its roots in the French soil, but even more to the ethnic, blood ties that constitute its organic unity and are the foundation of its racial superiority.

In Renan's text, there is no ambiguity: it is by dint of his race that Caliban is an inferior being and justly enslaved. We shall see that this does not represent the position of Shakespeare, which is far more complex. Nonetheless, regardless of the subtleties of the actual Shakespearean text, there is no doubt that the myth of Caliban has been portrayed as one of the founding myths of the colonial age. It is thus not surprising that the revolt of Caliban should be seen as the apt symbol of the overthrow of colonialism in modern times.

We must now look a little more closely at Shakespeare's own text, not least because parts of Césaire's own text are so closely related to the original, but also to be in a position to be able to measure the distance between the two.

The Caliban of Shakespeare

In 1611, when Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*, the European world was still in the early stages of the modern imperialist adventure. Of course, the voyages of discovery that had set Europe on this course had already taken place, along with the conquests of peoples and territories in the 'New World', the resultant plunder and the persecutions, most often in the name of religion. Over the previous century and a half, the European conception of the world had been totally transformed; even the size and shape of the planet had assumed completely different dimensions. Moreover, the European world view was still in a state of flux, with competing versions of the real geography of the planet contending to become the new consensus.

Although it is a reasonable assumption that Shakespeare was aware of these developments, there is nonetheless some debate as to the extent to which his own view of the world had been influenced by the 'new geography'.[6] Moreover, it would

be reckless to assume that his play was, either in intention or in effect, an accurate reflection of the contemporary geographical and political reality of the colonisation of the Americas. *The Tempest* remains primarily a work of the literary imagination, a work of fiction; its relationship to historical reality remains open to interpretation. This is not true, to anything like the same extent, of the work of Aimé Césaire, who is keen to dispel all such ambiguity regarding the relationship of his fictions to contemporary politico-historical questions.

Having thus taken due precautions, it is possible to say that the imaginary universe of *The Tempest* has its roots firmly planted in the Old World, rather more than in the New. The island itself is a magical space, belonging to the author's fantasy rather than the physical world of geographers' maps. Nonetheless, this fictitious place takes shape against the familiar background of the microcosm of the Mediterranean, considered the heart of the ancient world and united by a shared, albeit conflictual, history and culture. This is a world that has been thrown topsy-turvy by the discovery of a 'New World', but one that still has its feet firmly set in the culture of the Renaissance, drawing inspiration for its new ideas from the ancient sources on both sides of the Mediterranean from which they are derived. The birth pangs of modernity have only just begun; its travails will be long. It is only eleven years since Giordano Bruno was burnt at the stake in Rome in 1600 for his newfangled scientific notions. He will not be the last.

We do not have to involve ourselves in the controversy surrounding the precise location of the island. To a large extent, this may seem irrelevant, in the sense that it represents an imaginary space, much like the lost world of Atlantis, the golden land of Eldorado or the Utopia of Thomas More. Shakespeare would, of course, have been familiar with these earlier mythical utopias, and indeed takes the opportunity to satirise such idealist constructions, as expressed through the vision of Gonzalo, who would like to recreate the golden age on the island through the establishment of his ideal commonwealth (*The Tempest*, Act II, Scene i).

Just as the inventors of other such imaginary spaces, including the more modern spinners of space-based fantasies, are usually keen to establish some links with real, known, geographical locations, while maintaining a necessary imprecision, so Shakespeare is no exception. While never informing us specifically where his 'uninhabited' island is situated, his text nonetheless tells us that the shipwrecked travellers were returning from Tunis to Naples, where they had been celebrating the marriage of the daughter of the King of Naples to the King of Tunis. They had not embarked on a voyage of colonial conquest. The purpose of the journey was to seal an alliance between one Mediterranean country and another, which, in spite of its location on the further shore, was an integral part of the same world, the Carthage of antiquity. The sea still acts as a link, rather than a barrier, the unifying factor in this Mediterranean world, where the oppositions between Europe and Africa, between Europe and the Orient, have yet to develop the meaning that they will acquire in the age of imperialism.

It is true that Sebastian blames the marriage between the European and the African for being the cause of their misfortunes.

> Sir, you may thank yourself for this great loss.
> That would not bless our Europe with your daughter,
> But rather lose her to an African; (*The Tempest*, Act II, Scene i)

However, there is no necessary implication that it is because of any racial miscegenation involved. Certainly, the African in question is the foreign Other. However, there is no textual basis for suggesting that he is thereby inferior and we should be wary of reading this passage retrospectively from the standpoint of a knowledge of subsequent developments in colonial history, with the notions of superiority/inferiority integral to a fully developed dialectic of racism. Sebastian's reasoning could be based on a greater or lesser degree of xenophobia, or even on a feeling that allowing the princess to marry a foreigner has disturbed the normal order of things. Clearly, on a practical level, he is right: if she had married a European, no sea voyage would have been required and therefore there would have been no shipwreck.

This is not to suggest that ideas and theories about race were unheard of in Shakespeare's time. On the contrary, the 'discovery' and colonisation of the New World had given rise to an ongoing debate about the status of the conquered peoples, as well as attempts to draw up a hierarchy of races, influenced by Aristotle's *Politics*. One of the most striking examples of this type of philosophising was the debate on the status of the American Indian, which took place in Valladolid in 1550 between Juan Ginès de Supúlveda, who spoke in favour of slavery based on the Aristotelian doctrine of 'natural inferiority', and Bartolomé de Las Casas, who argued that the Indians were part of the human race (Gillies 1994: 151). Montaigne's essay, *Des Cannibales* (1580), had just been published in English in 1603, and it has been suggested that the name of Shakespeare's character derives from the word 'cannibal'.

There would nonetheless be a quantum leap from the type of reasoning based on rationalisations of the models of slavery practised in antiquity, to the full-blown ideological apparatus developed in the modern imperialist age, which called on the whole paraphernalia of pseudoscientific theories of biology and genetics to construct an all-embracing categorisation and hierarchy of the races with which to justify chattel slavery, the slave trade and the subjugation of the colonised peoples.

To discover what Shakespeare really thought about race, we would have to scrape away these accretions and examine the available evidence. However, this is not our primary purpose here, which is rather to look at the figure of Caliban and the various interpretations that this ambiguous character has endured, not just for his importance to an understanding of literary history, but for his status as a mythical political figure in the representations of modern imperialism.

For all the ambiguity that surrounds the shadowy figure of the King of Tunis, one thing is clear and that is that Caliban is not in the same league; he is in a different category altogether. The difficulty lies in deciding in which category to place him. Variously portrayed as the first New World representative of a colonised people to appear in English literature, as an ignoble savage who deserves enslavement, as the ignoble part (the Id) of Prospero's psyche, as a trailblazing critic of the American

dream – 'the brave new world' (*The Tempest*, Act V, Scene i), as the modern champion of a new Caribbean identity, as the true emblematic postcolonial hero, or as a completely fictional literary invention with no political significance whatsoever, Caliban remains one of the most discussed figures of our time. This suggests that there are major issues of topical relevance at stake.[7]

The web of Shakespeare's dramatic universe is constituted, on the one hand, by the relations of human beings with the elements of nature – fire, wind, earth and water – and, on the other hand, by the relationships between human beings themselves, engaged in struggles for the commanding heights of power in societies that are based entirely on the hierarchical mode.

Often resorting to force of arms in these power struggles, the protagonists may also invoke a weapon that is every bit as mighty – the power of the word. Prospero's brother, for instance, uses the rhetoric of his propaganda speeches to consolidate the power he has usurped, to such an extent that he ends up believing it himself.

> He being thus lorded,
> Not only with what my revenue yielded,
> But what my power might else exact, like one
> Who having into truth, by telling of it,
> Made such a sinner of his memory,
> To credit his own lie – he did believe
> He was indeed the Duke. (*The Tempest*, Act I, Scene ii)

Yet the princes of this world, with all their might, cannot escape from the overriding power of the elemental forces of nature. The power of the human word is strictly limited in this domain and only rarely, through the intervention of prayer or magic, can human beings manage to control these natural forces. Prospero is one of these rare beings who attains mastery of fire, water and the wind of the tempest, through his spirit Ariel. He controls the earth, which occupies the lowest rank in the hierarchy of the elements, in the shape of Caliban, portrayed as an ignoble savage, who is destined only for manual labour as a slave. Caliban is literally equated with the earth: 'What ho! slave! Caliban! / Thou earth, thou! (*The Tempest*, Act I, Scene ii). The lowly status of the earth is also borne out by Antonio telling Sebastian: 'Here lies your brother, / No better than the earth he lies upon' (*The Tempest*, Act II, Scene i).

The source of Prospero's power lies in the texts that he has studied, which have given him the knowledge of the secrets of magic. Caliban is well aware of this and urges his allies to burn Prospero's books and thus destroy his magical powers.

> Remember
> First to possess his books: for without them
> He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not
> One spirit to command; they all do hate him
> As rootedly as I. Burn but his books. (*The Tempest*, Act III, Scene ii)

The pure ethereal spirit, Ariel, shares this power, which is also the power of poetry; for it is through his poetical incantations that Ariel creates his magic spells. The power of the word can take on many different forms.

Caliban, however, is at the nether end of the spectrum. He, too, has acquired the power of speech, thanks to the efforts of Prospero and, in particular, his daughter Miranda, who undertook his education. She sums up thus its primary aim, which was to permit him access to language and thus to the possibility of communicating his purpose.

> Abhorred slave,
> Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
> Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
> Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
> One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage,
> Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
> A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
> With words that made them known. (*The Tempest*, Act I, Scene ii)

He has learned his master and mistress's language, though the purpose to which he puts it is not that intended by them. As he says, if he has become fluent, it is all the better to curse them.

> You taught me language, and my profit on't
> Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language! (*The Tempest*, Act I, Scene ii)

Learning the language has allowed him to articulate his awareness of his lot and his wretchedness with it, although it has not equipped him with the capability to transcend his natural condition. In Shakespeare's hierarchical conception, only Ariel's desire for freedom is worthy and noble. Caliban's desire for freedom is severely limited in scope; he wishes to free himself from his master Prospero, but is quite prepared to bow down before new lords, even at the feet of the unlikely pair Trinculo and Stephano, whom he worships as gods dropped from the sky (*The Tempest*, Act II, Scene ii). His freedom will be only to exchange one master for another. He is a hopeless case, whose devilish nature condemns him for ever to his lot as a slave. It is because of his nature that the efforts of Prospero and Miranda have been doomed to failure; in their efforts to educate him, they were well intentioned but misguided. As Prospero sees him, he is:

> A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
> Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,
> Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost ... (*The Tempest*, Act IV, Scene i)

We have already seen some of the problems associated with a retrospective reading of Shakespeare and the inevitable anachronisms to which it may give rise. Nonetheless,

in line with the development of colonial and postcolonial history, these readings have taken place, they have acquired their own reality and the Prospero/Caliban relationship has acquired new significance as it has been reinterpreted by subsequent generations. In real historical terms, this type of reinterpretation or reinvention of historical fictions has as one of its most significant examples the rewriting and propagation of the Tudor version of British history, in which the figure of the necromancer/scholar/cartographer and finally Prospero-like Dr John Dee played a not insignificant part, not least through the coining of the term 'the British Empire' and the propagation of the tale of the Welsh Prince Madoc, pre-Columbian 'discoverer' of America in 1170, with which to counter Spanish imperial ambitions in the Americas (Williams 1987).[8]

We shall be returning to a discussion of these issues. For the moment, let us venture to suggest that, were the educational efforts of Prospero and Miranda to be equated with the notion of a civilising mission, it would have to be construed as a complete failure, in this case at least. This is also true of Aimé Césaire's version of the Tempest, where the master's attempts to put his civilising mission into practice through the education of Caliban must likewise be viewed as a failure.

Césaire's Caliban

Just as in Shakespeare's play, Césaire's slave Caliban acquires his master's language and uses it to the same end – to hurl insults against him. However, here he is no longer confined to the rantings and ravings of an impotent verbal rage. In the first place, unlike the Caliban of Shakespeare, who only accedes to the world of language through the acquisition of his master's language, Césaire's Caliban remains in possession of his own original language, his mother tongue, derided by Prospero as a primitive, barbarous tongue. He does not simply have to speak with his master's voice and, indeed, he uses his own language to articulate his demand for freedom, *'Uhuru!'* (*Une Tempête*, p. 24). Secondly, he has learned to see the education that he has received for what it is. Prospero has trained him to do the practical tasks that are required of him; it is for this reason that he has taught him French, so that he can understand his master's orders, all the better to do his bidding.[9] Césaire had already dismissed the pragmatic, utilitarian aims and outcomes of colonial educational policy and practice in his *Discours sur le colonialisme*, describing it as a 'parody of cultural education'.[10] In the play, it is evident that Prospero has refused to share his knowledge of science; it remains his monopoly and prerogative – 'enfermée dans les gros livres que voilà' (*Une Tempête*, p. 25). If Prospero's books are now the repository of scientific knowledge, rather than the secrets of the magical arts, access to them is still denied to Caliban.

We are clearly now in a different world from that of Shakespeare. Whereas, as we have seen, Shakespeare's island occupied an imaginary space, reminiscent of the mythical islands of antiquity or Renaissance utopias, Césaire's island is firmly set within the frame of the historical reality of imperialism and contemporary politics. It is a world that has witnessed the unfolding of the whole history of modern

imperialism, in the name of European superiority over the primitive Other, including, in its most absolute form, the enslavement and trading of black people and the denial of human status that these entailed. Thus, there is no doubt about the location of Césaire's island; it is located with geographical precision in the Caribbean. This precision extends to the ethnic status of his version of Ariel, characterised as a 'slave, ethnically a mulatto', and his Caliban as a 'Negro slave'. In the case of Caliban, however, the epithet may vary to reflect other ethnic strands, in addition to his origins as a black African; he is also referred to as an 'Indien', i.e. indigenous Amerindian, as well as a 'Zindien', the creole term for an Indian originating in India or the East Indies and usually transported to the Caribbean as a bonded or indentured labourer. In this way, Caliban's composite racial and national origins make him into a representative of all three ethnic groups who have suffered from colonial servitude and oppression in the course of Caribbean history (Toumson 1981: 416–18). The subject of Césaire's play has become the legacy of colonialism.

However, the differences with Shakespeare's original *Tempest* do not arise merely as a result of the wedge of history that has come to pass in the intervening three and a half centuries, producing fundamentally different world views, although this obviously constitutes an important determining set of factors. There are also quite different conceptions of literature and the theatre at play here.

Thus, Shakespeare's avowed aim was quite simply to please his audience with his art, as he makes clear in the Epilogue to the play, spoken by Prospero.

> Gentle breath of yours my sails
> Must fill, or else my project fails,
> Which was to please. (*The Tempest*, Epilogue)

Of course, his texts themselves have their own resonance and effects, which extend into the political domain, independent of their author's creative purpose. However, Césaire's political purpose is unambiguous; his conception of the relation between literature and politics belongs to the Sartrean school of *littérature engagée*. His play is thus a cry for freedom, articulating demands that have their equivalent in the real political world, and, in particular here, the preoccupations and concerns of contemporary American politics of race – the obsession with sexuality and rape (*Une Tempête*, p. 27), the reality of the ghetto (p. 26) and the slogan 'Freedom now!' (p. 36).

In line with the political thrust of this *Tempest*, the focus has shifted. The conflicts between the whites are given cursory treatment, for they are of merely superficial interest as compared with the primary struggle between the colonisers and the colonised. Yet, in this shortened version of the play, Césaire has retained the theme of the elemental forces of nature, albeit rewritten with a new significance. For, in his text, these natural forces take on the forms of the deities and devils of African animism; the whole of the animal and vegetable world is suffused with this spirit life.[11] Sycorax, Shakespeare's 'foul witch' and 'blue-ey'd hag', is now reinvented as the Mother Spirit of the natural world. Moreover, a new god makes his appearance, as Shango, the mighty god of the tempest, identified by Caliban with his struggle for

freedom in a world where the hierarchical order has been overturned. In the natural hierarchy, the earth is no longer the basest element. Caliban, who tills the soil, respects it as a living thing, just as he respects manual labour itself; the labourer is no longer the lowest of the low.

> you think that the earth is something dead … It's so much easier! It's dead, so you can walk all over it, sully it, trample it underfoot like a conqueror! But I respect it, for I know that it is a living thing and that Sycorax also is alive. (*Une Tempête*, pp. 25–26)

For the Europeans, the island is indeed a wonderland, *'un pays merveilleux'*, no longer in the sense of a fiction, a product of the imagination, but as the Other of Europe and perhaps a foretaste of hell itself, *'un avant-goût de l'enfer'*.[12] It is no accident that brought the shipwrecked travellers to the island; they set out to conquer foreign lands (*Une Tempête*, p. 22). Like Prospero himself, these people are white colonial invaders, representing the whole gamut of colonial characters, from the most brutal to the most enlightened. Gonzalo, for instance, has pretensions to educate the others in the virtues of the primitive simplicity of the noble savage. In his view, civilisation can benefit from bathing in the 'fountain of eternal youth' of more primitive societies, which can be a source of revitalisation and a corrective to some of the failings due to world-weariness and over-sophistication (*Une Tempête*, p. 41).

Prospero himself claims to be a man of the Enlightenment, hounded from his homeland by the Inquisition, by 'beings of the night who fear the light'.[13] His ambition is to hand on a world filled with reason, beauty and harmony, for which he has already laid the foundations (*Une Tempête*, p. 67). Yet he is also a man of action, for whom the ends justify the means (*Une Tempête*, p. 23); a white man who, in the face of the crisis caused by Caliban's revolt, has no difficulty making up his mind to join a common front, along with the other whites, hitherto considered his enemies, for they are not only of the same race but also of the right class.[14] He is an arbitrary despot who allows his whims free rein (*Une Tempête*, pp. 43–44). In short, he is the boss, able to command the labour of others (*Une Tempête*, pp. 55–56). Prospero the wizard has become transformed into Prospero the scientist, using his scientific knowledge to master and manipulate the processes of nature, creating illusions to maintain his control. His hostility to nature is opposed by Caliban, who has become the advocate of more harmonious relations between man and nature (*Une Tempête*, p. 74).

Trinculo and Stephano are at the lower end of the social scale and have swallowed whole all the ideologies of empire and Republic that they have been fed. In their case, the *mission civilisatrice* is reduced to a desire to exploit their native find, to gain the maximum profit from him (*Une Tempête*, pp. 60–65). As it happens, it is these two drunkards who let the cat out of the bag, as far as the contradictions of the Revolutionary/Republican discourse are concerned. Stephano, the 'vieux républicain', with 'les tripes républicaines', rejoices at the fact that the tempest will sweep away a whole host of 'hurluberlus qui ont toujours empêché le pauvre monde de vivre' (*Une Tempête*, p. 62). However, if he welcomes the revolutionary whirlwind

that will rid the island of the ruling group, it is only because it gives him the chance to proclaim himself king in their place.

Away from the false rhetoric, the reality is that the revolutionary process is well under way and cannot be halted. So, when Prospero accuses Caliban of undermining the whole order of things, like the god-devil Eshu, who makes order from disorder and chaos from order (*Une Tempête*, pp. 70–71), he is right. Nothing will ever be the same again.

Where, then, does this leave the ideological problematic of the French Revolution? What, if any, is its significance for the liberation struggles of the enslaved and the colonised peoples? Césaire himself saw the historical process of the French Revolution as a potent force for change in the colonies, in the first instance, because of the destabilising and disrupting effect that it had on the monolithic class structure of colonial society, freeing its latent energy.[15]

In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, the revolutionary struggles of the oppressed had to first pass through the stage of rejecting the ideology that was shoring up their oppression. Thus, Caliban, revolutionary fighter on behalf of the colonised peoples, must first reject the ideology, the discourse, of the colonising power. He does this in the first instance by asserting the right to refuse the identity imposed on him by the coloniser. He will no longer accept the name of Caliban; what is more, he will refuse to take any name at all. In this way, by remaining nameless, he will be for ever aware that his name and, along with it, his whole identity were stolen from him. He will not allow the colonising power to redefine him with a new name. Just like Malcolm X, he opts for anonymity: 'Call me X. That will be better. Like calling me the man without a name. More exactly, the man, whose name has been stolen … Each time you call me, it will remind me of the basic fact that you have robbed me of everything, down to my identity!' (*Une Tempête*, p. 28).

This is but the first stage of the revolutionary process. Ariel, who becomes his brother not just in suffering and oppression but also in the struggle and the hope of liberty ('frères dans la souffrance et l'esclavage, frères aussi dans l'espérance', *Une Tempête*, p. 35), gains his freedom by the end of the play. Caliban, though, is still continuing his struggle. The process has nonetheless become inexorable and the outcome no longer in doubt. For Caliban has become aware of the lie at the heart of Prospero's ideology and so is no longer subject to its power; the weakness of the colonial master's position, based as it is on an insoluble contradiction, has been exposed and his power undermined irredeemably (see Césaire (1955)/1970: 6).

This liberating change has not just taken place in Caliban; he has managed to undermine Prospero's confidence in the validity of his own discourse. As the latter acknowledges, Caliban has made him doubt himself for the first time in his life.[16] At the end of the play, we are left in no doubt as to the de-civilising effect that colonisation has on the coloniser himself (Césaire (1955)/1970: 9). Caliban is the one who assumes a position of moral superiority, rejecting his master's model of civilised man, as the man who knows how to kill, who asserts his power through force alone.

(Prospero): Come on! You don't dare! You know you are nothing but an animal – incapable of killing.
(Caliban): Defend yourself then! I am not a murderer. (*Une Tempête*, p. 79)

Césaire's Prospero does not leave the island; he cannot bring himself to abandon his mission to 'defend civilisation' (*Une Tempête*, p. 92). Just as in the case of Martinique, which remains a French territory, the decolonisation process is not yet complete; the colonial power remains in place, even if fatally undermined. In the United States too, where no simple return to the *status quo ante* was possible, there has also been no definitive end to the struggle for freedom (Toumson 1981: 466).

The usefulness of Caliban as an emblematic figure may not, then, have run its course, in spite of those who point to the irony entailed in the adoption of a European creation as the symbol of black, anticolonial and postcolonial struggles (Vaughan and Mason Vaughan 1991: 162). This last point could be shrugged off as a purely mechanistic, superficial response that ignores the real appropriation and transformation of the myth of Caliban by non-Europeans into a qualitatively different figure. However, given the widespread use of similar arguments with regard to the use of the language of the colonising power by its former colonial subjects, as well as its ideological constructs, it cannot perhaps be dismissed so easily.

In the case of Caliban, it is not a simple reversal of the meaning or the value attached to the character, but a complex set of re-figurations and reinventions to match a new political and literary scenario. Similarly, postcolonial writers using the colonial language do not take it just as it is, but mould it into their own instrument for their own ends. Caliban himself rails against his master's language; however, his response is not simply to revert to his mother tongue in a simplistic about-turn. Rather, he enriches his own linguistic armoury through the use of both instruments as appropriate.

Through the character of Caliban, Césaire thus synthesizes the affirmations of Negritude together with reflections on the process whereby modernist Enlightenment ideology, used in part to rationalise French colonial domination, has also provided an instrument that can be transformed to give the dominated the means to overthrow their dominators. This has not meant taking over the ideology lock, stock and barrel in its original form, nor has it meant a simple polar reversal of terms. On the contrary, it has meant, on the one hand, pursuing the logic of the Revolution to its final conclusion and yet, at the same time, recognising its limitations and shortcomings and thus the need to draw on and invent new representations and ideas with which to articulate the potential for change in an ever-changing political situation.

This chapter will end with a brief consideration of the work of Albert Memmi.

Albert Memmi and Colonisation

Memmi's reputation as a major analyst of colonialism, whose work contributed to the theorisation of the anticolonial struggle, rests mainly on his essays, *Portrait du colonisé*, along with the *Portrait du colonisateur*, which were published in 1957, with a preface by Jean-Paul Sartre.[17] It is a work that was inspired by his universalist, rationalist humanism.

Memmi emphasised the reciprocity or interdependence that is integral to the colonial relationship, as well as its inevitable tendency to disintegrate. The characteristic features and behaviour of both coloniser and colonised are mutually

defined and determined by this relationship (Memmi (1957)/1985: 13–14). Moreover, he also stressed the importance of economic exploitation to the colonial relation. While this relation could not be reduced to the economic element alone, this was the essential one and the other elements could be dispensed with provided that the economic advantage remained (Memmi (1957)/1985: 31–36). Yet in Memmi's analysis, it is the relation of people to people that is the important one, and more important than any class factors (Memmi (1957)/1985: 64). This is why, ultimately, he believes that those who cross the line, those he calls the *transfuges*, can never overcome their objective situation as part of the oppressing people and, whether they like it or not, will be 'doomed to share their fate, as they have shared their good fortune' (Memmi (1957)/1985: 64). Indeed, Memmi himself left his birthplace and settled in France, conscious that there was no place for such as him in post-independence Tunisia. His subsequent *Portrait du décolonisé*, published in 2004, draws a gloomy picture of the state of the countries of the Maghreb and the disappointing results of independence so far (Memmi 2004).

As he put it, the choice for the well-intentioned colonial Leftist is not between *'le bien et le mal'* ('good and evil'), but rather between *'le mal et le malaise'* (Memmi (1957)/1985: 68). Because of this notion of collective responsibility 'as a member of an oppressive national group' (Memmi (1957)/1985: 65), there is only one choice for the anticolonial European and that is to keep quiet and withdraw (Memmi 1957/1985: 69).

This was a notion that was certainly open to debate and, even more to the point, many European militants were prepared to put their commitment to the anticolonial struggle on the line in active and, at times, life-threatening ways (see Chapter 5). For someone from Memmi's background, growing up in a poor family in Tunisia, with a Jewish father and a Berber mother, whose only language was colloquial Arabic, the choices may not have been as clear-cut as some of his critics would have it. While he considered himself one of the colonised and qualified to write about the status of the colonised from the inside, he was also able to identify with and understand the mentality of the coloniser, even if he only took from his French education the best of the rational humanist tradition.

Some, if not all, of these ambiguities also applied in the case of Albert Camus. However, for all his empathy with the problems of the Algerian population, as reflected in his journalism for the communist newspaper *Alger Républicain* and political activism with the PCA (Algerian Communist Party), until his expulsion in 1937 for supporting Messali Hadj and his Parti du peuple algérien (PPA), Camus did not share Memmi's self-identification as one of the colonised and ultimately drew different conclusions from his experience. Camus had hoped to avoid the bitterness and violence of the armed struggle and campaigned for a truce to avoid harm to civilians, but lost his credibility as a potential arbiter after his off-the-cuff response to an Algerian student heckler at the Nobel Prize ceremony in Stockholm in 1957, in which he proclaimed that he would always put his 'mother' before 'justice'.

Memmi, on the other hand, developed a critique of the European Left for its lack of comprehension of the nationalist movements (Memmi (1957)/1985: 56). He

also described its malaise regarding the use of terrorism, as well as the importance often given to the reactionary or the religious in the ideology of the anticolonial struggle (Memmi (1957)/1985: 57–69), while, at the same time, raising questions regarding the universal applicability of socialism and Marxism (Memmi (1957)/1985: 63).

Yet, all through the *Portrait du colonisé*, Memmi draws on the analogy between the colonised and the proletariat, while making clear the differentiation between the two. He does this primarily in terms of the specific mystification of the colonised that has been developed by colonial ideology. According to this mystification, certain features are assumed to be typical of the colonised, not of any particular individual or group but of the colonised in general. For Memmi, this is what constitutes the essence of racism, which he describes as 'giving substance to a real or imagined characteristic of the accused, for the benefit of the accuser' (Memmi (1957)/1985: 103). Thus, the so-called 'laziness' of the colonised justifies the low wages they are paid (Memmi (1957)/1985: 101). Their 'feeble-mindedness' rationalises the need for a 'protectorate' (Memmi (1957)/1985: 103). Their criminal, violent disposition rationalises the need for a ruthless police force (Memmi (1957)/1985: 104). Their simplicity, absence of needs, ability to cope with poverty, rejection of progress are all cited as arguments in favour of their wretched condition. Even their perceived qualities are translated into failings: for example, hospitality is derided as feckless and wasteful (Memmi (1957)/1985: 105). With their 'inscrutability' and 'unpredictability', the colonised are systematically divested of all the qualities that would make them human beings. Dehumanised, they are also depersonalised, their individuality submerged in a collective 'they' who behave in the same way (Memmi (1957)/1985: 106). No freedom is allowed to the colonised, who is not able to leave his state. Unlike the coloniser, the colonised does not have the choice of being colonised or not and only exists in relation to the coloniser. Ultimately, the relation, in its pure form, taken to the extreme, ties the very existence of the colonised to the needs of the coloniser; (s)he only exists in the capacity of colonised – *'colonisé pur'* (Memmi (1957)/1985: 107).

In his own take on the Hegelian master–slave dialectic, Memmi describes the deformed consciousness necessary to both sides of the relation to ensure the survival of colonialism. Objective control and mastery are not sufficient; psychological connivance and reciprocity are also required by both parties. For colonial mastery to be complete, physical control is not enough, the coloniser must also believe in his legitimacy. For this legitimacy to be complete, it is not enough that the colonised are enslaved or subjugated; they must also accept their enslavement or subjugation through recognition of the coloniser as master.[18]

When Memmi takes up the theme of the relation of the colonised to history, it is not to share Marx's view of the positive input of colonialism in bringing the colonised into history, but to recognise that colonisation is the primary cause of the eviction of the colonised from the historical process, as well as from any involvement in public, political life.[19] In no sense are the colonised the subjects of history or of their own destiny; they have been transformed into objects. At the same time, the

conditions are slowly being created for the realisation that they have the power to reverse this relation.

On the one hand, the developments of history itself undermine the perceived power of the colonising power. France's defeat in the Second World War by Germany in Europe and by Japan in Indochina destroyed any belief that French power was invincible. Yet, not only were the peoples of the colonised countries influenced by perceptions of France's weakness during the war and the occupation, there was also, as Memmi pointed out, the inspirational value of the Resistance movement and the defeat of the Axis powers to remind them of the possibility of waging armed struggle against tyranny, along with the reasonable expectation of achieving freedom by so doing (Memmi (1957)/1985: 115). The French, who were well aware of this danger, took steps to ban films about the Resistance in the colonies.

Nonetheless, Memmi also stresses the slow pace of development of nationalism amongst the colonised. On the one hand, this was seen by him as a consequence of colonialism itself, which objectively prevents the colonised from having any experience of national citizenship, unless it is defined in negative terms – not being part of the colonising nation.[20]

Memmi's analysis thus stresses the negative effects of colonisation. Rather than speeding up the historical process, it contributed towards the stagnation of colonised society, especially as far as the institutions were concerned, which were divorced from the possibility of normal social development. The traditional family was reinforced and religion reduced to its more rigid formalistic aspects, in a reaction of self-defence (Memmi (1957)/1985: 118–121). This amounted to the petrification of the colonised, who were forced to live outside time, unable to plan and build for the future and limited to a present that was itself an amputated abstraction, whilst at the same time losing their grip on the past and the memory of the past, in the absence of real living institutions for the relay of this memory and in the overwhelming presence of commemorative rites and symbols glorifying the colonial power (Memmi (1957)/1985: 122).

There were, of course, ways forward for the colonised peoples. Memmi presents these as two options: on the one hand, the colonised person may try to become like the coloniser, 'become the other'; his other option is to reclaim all the dimensions of his humanity that colonisation had taken from him.[21]

The first option entails a process of imitation or mimicry. The role played by mimicry in Memmi's analysis needs to be distinguished from a number of other approaches. Memmi sees it as an aspiration to the elimination of difference, a way in which the colonised attempts to subsume his/her otherness by becoming as like the coloniser as possible. For him, the most extreme example of this sort of behaviour is demonstrated by those who undertake a mixed marriage with a partner belonging to the colonisers' camp.

Others had seen a potential for subversion of the colonial relation through mimicry, or parody, as it was portrayed, for instance, in the Hauka rituals filmed by Jean Rouch. In his film, *Les Maîtres fous* (1955), the participants, immigrants from Niger who work in Accra, take time out from their colonial situation in the city to

go off to the countryside on Sundays to engage in a subversive ritual, where they sacrifice a dog and fall into a trance, during which they are possessed by the spirits and act out the roles of various members of the colonial hierarchy – the governor general, the engineer, the doctor's wife, the corporal of the guard and so on, in a gross, comic parody of the colonial order. More recently, Homi Bhabha and others have theorised the subversive potential of mimicry and parody (Bhabha 1994). These later theorists have also stressed that it is not a one-way appropriation of the colonisers' culture, but is usually part of a two-way process of hybridisation (Braithwaite 1978). On the other hand, Fanon was clear that it was merely a further factor of alienation for the colonised and called for an end to mimicry of Europe, proposing as an alternative the creation of a new, 'total man', free of alienation.[22]

Memmi, also, does not see mimetism or mimicry as a means of subversion or as a potential strategy of resistance. Instead of presenting it as a solution, he criticises the concept of assimilation that it implies, for this assimilation, so trumpeted in French colonial ideology, is actually impossible within the colonial context. This is not because the colonised person will be required to make unacceptable changes and turn his back on his own community, but because the colonisers will not permit him to join theirs. He will be subjected, not just to scorn, but also to ridicule by the colonialists, who will always find the telling sign, the lack of taste, the note that jars. As Memmi says: 'A person who sits astride two cultures is rarely in a comfortable position and it is a fact that he may not always hit the right note' (Memmi (1957)/1985: 141). Nonetheless, he insists that it was not the colonised who rejected assimilation; it was the coloniser who refused to allow it. His conclusion is not so much the failure of the vaunted assimilation policy, but rather its impossibility within a context of colonial relations. It could, in fact, only have worked if it had been possible not just for individuals but for the whole people – an impossibility without doing away with colonialism itself.[23] Memmi makes clear his sympathy for the ideal of assimilation – in principle and on the face of its pretensions to universalism and socialism, what he calls 'un parfum universaliste et socialiste qui la rend *a priori* respectable'. Yet the reality is that even the communists have not shown any particular or precise commitment to the assimilation project in the colonial context, as it represents 'the opposite of colonialism' and thus its inevitable demise (Memmi (1957)/1985: 161).

The only other route is revolt, a rupture with the colonial power. Yet Memmi does not see this as an absolute reversal of the previous desire for assimilation. As he says:

> Even at the height of his rebellion, the colonised person still shows the traces of what he has borrowed and learned from such a long cohabitation … This gives rise to the paradoxical situation (often cited as decisive proof of lack of gratitude) whereby the colonised make their demands and carry out their fight in the name of the very values of the colonisers, using their ways of thinking and their methods of struggle. (Memmi (1957)/1985: 144)

This is not the whole picture, however. At the same time as the colonised use the weapons of the colonisers against them, they also develop what Memmi calls a

'counter-racism', in which the deepening divide between colonialist and anticolonialist is articulated. This entails seeing the differences between the two sides as a Manichaean division, in which they are absolutely opposed to each other in terms of black and white. Yet, in fact, Memmi stressed that what he calls the counter-racism of the colonised is not the mirror image of colonial racism. Unlike the latter, it is not based on notions of biology or metaphysics, but is social and historical in character. It is not based on the belief in the inferiority of the hated group but on an awareness of its aggression and harmfulness, on fear – and also admiration. All in all, it is defensive, not offensive, and, as such, can be the prelude to a positive movement forward by way of a reassertion of the colonised's own selfhood (Memmi (1957)/1985: 147). This analysis of 'counter-racism' as essentially reactive and part of a positive dynamic of change was taken up by many engaged in 'black nationalist' and 'black power' struggles.

In this connection, Memmi has important insights into the ambiguities surrounding moves by the colonised to reclaim their own identity. The first phase involves the acknowledgement of their separateness and difference, their 'otherness'. This may entail recognition that this difference has, in fact, been defined by the colonisers, most often in terms of their supposed religious, traditional, non-scientific, non-technical characteristics. Where it does not, there remains a large part of mystification (Memmi (1957)/1985: 151–52). In both cases, however, the colonised define themselves in terms of their negativity – they are not the colonisers. Even when, in a second phase, they pass to a glorification of their negativity, transforming it into positive attributes to form a 'counter-mythology', they remain defined in relation to the colonisers and colonialism. In fact, the reactive nature of the colonised's perceptions of self and the awareness of their situation provoke a deepening of the state of alienation, which can only disappear with the elimination of colonialism (Memmi (1957)/1985: 153–54).

It was by his analysis of colonialism and the psychological make-up of both colonised and coloniser that Memmi's impact was most felt, rather than at the level of political theory and strategy of the anticolonial struggle. Indeed, as Edward Said has pointed out, there is little discussion of the strategic options and debates (Said 1993: 328). Moreover, even his analysis of colonialism was criticised by Sartre, who disagreed with Memmi's depiction of it as a 'situation' with psychological implications for those involved, rather than as an economic and political 'system' (Sartre in Memmi (1957)/1985: 24–25). There are, however, two areas in which he expressed clearly held views on the politics of anticolonialism. One related to the area of traditional culture and religion and the role this may play in politics. The other was the political import of what seems to have been something of a hobby horse – mixed marriages.

Thus, he is suspicious of any attempts to revive traditional culture, especially when it concerned religion or ritual, and points to the dangers of breathing new life into these ancient rites and myths for political purposes. Indeed, he likens the political leaders who follow this path to sorcerers' apprentices, who will be unable to deal with the consequences of unleashing these forces (Memmi (1957)/1985: 148–49).

His position on mixed marriages is more bizarre. His claims that those political leaders who have European spouses (Habib Bourguiba, Messali Hadj, Ferhat Abbas are singled out for mention) are all the more fervent in their nationalism, because they travelled the furthest towards the colonisers through their marriages and then found their situations untenable, or 'unliveable', as he puts it. Not only does he see the marriage playing a vital determining role in convincing them of their patriotism, but he also implies that their commitment to the nationalist struggle (what he calls a 'complete submission' to the cause) is in part an attempt to assuage their guilt and make amends.[24] Although it appears to be making a political point, this cannot be considered a serious political analysis. Interestingly, Memmi himself married a European woman.

Memmi's analysis of the colonial situation can perhaps best be summed up in the context of his rational, universal humanism. The way forward he proposed was simple: the complete end to colonisation, to be achieved by revolution, not by reforms (*bourguibisme* is explicitly rejected) (Memmi (1957)/1985: 162). Although this revolution may not be completed in one fell swoop, but rather in stages, the ultimate aim was to be the transcending of nationalism, religion, tradition, ethnicity, all of which were considered to be colonial categories. In his vision of a universal rationalism, science and technology are exempted from the colonialist taint. In an echo of the controversy surrounding the French Communist Party's defence of a supposed division between the two sciences – bourgeois and proletarian science – in the 1950s, inspired by the theories propounded by Lysenko in the Soviet Union (Lecourt 1976; Majumdar 1995), Memmi insists that knowledge cannot be classified as either Western or Oriental. Knowledge is knowledge; its universal character is not questioned by him.

In his preface to the *Portrait du colonisé*, Sartre summed up well Memmi's faith in the redemptive power of reason:

> between the racist usurpation of the colonialists and the future nation that the colonised will build, in which 'he suspects that there will be no place for him', he tries to live his particular situation by transcending it towards the universal. Not towards a universal Humanity, which does not yet exist, but towards a rigorous Reason which is incumbent upon everyone. (Memmi (1957)/1985: 32)

Memmi, in fact, extended his belief in the universal value of knowledge and reason to cultural acquisitions also: 'If oppression has come in the guise of the English or the French, it is nonetheless true that cultural and technical achievements belong to all peoples. Science is neither Western nor Oriental, no more than it is bourgeois or proletarian. There are only two ways to cast concrete – the right way and the wrong way' (Memmi (1957)/1985: 163). Memmi is, of course, referring to the achievements of the West for his examples.

Notes

1. The source of his inspiration was acknowledged by Césaire himself, according to Roger Toumson (Toumson 1981: 465).
2. See Jacqueline Sieger's interview with Césaire in 1961 (quoted by Megevand and Little 1994: 439).
3. All quotations from Shakespeare's *Tempest* are taken from the Tudor Edition of the complete works, edited by Peter Alexander, first published by Collins in 1951 in London and Glasgow.
4. On the intertextual relationship between the plays of Shakespeare, Renan and Césaire, see Toumson 1981.
5. See also Chapter 1.
6. This whole debate is dealt with in Gillies 1994.
7. On some of the debates around the character of Caliban, see Skura 1989.
8. He has himself been the subject of a reinvention through Peter Ackroyd's novel *The House of Dr Dee* (Ackroyd 1993).
9. 'à baragouiner ton langage pour comprendre tes ordres: couper du bois, laver la vaisselle, pécher le poisson, planter les légumes', *Une Tempête*, p. 25.
10. 'en parodie de la formation culturelle, la fabrication hâtive de quelques milliers de fonctionnaires subalternes, de boys, d'artisans, d'employés de commerce et d'interprètes nécessaires à la bonne marche des affaires' (Césaire (1955)/1970: 18).
11. Sycorax ma mère!
    Serpent! Pluie! Eclairs!
    Et je te retrouve partout:
    Dans l'oeil de la mare qui me regarde, sans ciller,
    à travers les scirpes.
    Dans le geste de la racine tordue et son bond qui attend.
    Dans la nuit, la toute-voyante aveugle,
    la toute-flaireuse sans naseaux!' (*Une Tempête*, p. 26).
12. As Gonzalo says: 'On a bien raison de dire que ce sont des pays merveilleux. Rien de commun avec nos pays d'Europe' (*Une Tempête*, pp. 16–17).
13. 'êtres de la nuit qui craignent la lumière' (*Une Tempête*, p. 21).
14. 'ce sont gens de ma race, et de haut rang' (*Une Tempête*, p. 29).
15. 'Le premier service – d'ordre temporel – que la Révolution ait rendu aux peuples colonisés c'est d'avoir existé, d'abord parce que la Révolution désorganisant le pouvoir et désarticulant le système qui comprimait les classes de la société coloniale, en libérait la latente énergie' (Césaire (1961)/1981: 343).
16. 'tu es celui par qui pour la première fois j'ai douté de moi-même' (*Une Tempête*, p. 90).
17. Memmi is also a renowned novelist, whose major novels include *La Statue de sel* (1953), *Agar* (1955) and *Le Scorpion* (1969).
18. Il existe, assurément – à un point de son évolution – , une certaine adhésion du colonisé à la colonisation. Mais, cette adhésion est le résultat de la colonisation et non sa cause; elle naît après et non avant l'occupation coloniale. Pour que le colonisateur soit complètement le maître, il ne suffit pas qu'il le soit objectivement, il faut encore qu'il croie à sa légitimité; et, pour que cette légitimité soit entière, il ne suffit pas que le colonisé soit objectivement esclave, il est nécessaire qu'il s'accepte tel. En somme, le colonisateur doit être reconnu par le colonisé. (Memmi (1957)/1985: 109).
19. 'La carence la plus grave subie par le colonisé est d'être placé *hors de l'histoire et hors de la cité*. La colonisation lui supprime toute part libre dans la guerre comme dans la paix,

toute décision qui contribue au destin du monde et du sien, toute responsabilité historique et sociale' (Memmi (1957)/1985: 112–13).

20. 'Par suite de la colonisation, le colonisé ne fait presque jamais l'expérience de la nationalité et de la citoyenneté, sinon *privativement: nationalement, civiquement, il n'est que ce que n'est pas le colonisateur'* (Memmi (1957)/1985: 117).

21. 'Il tente *soit de devenir autre, soit de reconquérir toutes ses dimensions*, dont l'a amputé la colonisation' (Memmi (1957)/1985: 137).

22. 'Décidons de ne pas imiter l'Europe et bandons nos muscles et nos cerveaux dans une direction nouvelle. Tâchons d'inventer l'homme total que l'Europe a été incapable de faire triompher' (Fanon (1961)/1987: 236). See also V.S. Naipaul's novel, *The Mimic Men*, which also used the theme of its alienating effect (Naipaul 1967).

23. In Algeria, another solution was proposed to eradicate the problems of colonial relations, this time by colonialists of an extreme political hue, who found their home in the movement for *l'Algérie française*. Quite simply, this involved exterminating the native population, through giving each French settler a gun and nine bullets. This is not as far-fetched as it sounds. A similar policy was carried out elsewhere in the world, notably to deal with the native American population. The downside, however, as Memmi points out, is that extermination cannot save colonialism, only hasten its demise, since it would mean the end of the exploitation of the colonised (Memmi (1957)/1985: 160–61).

24. Il est remarquable d'ailleurs qu'il sera d'autant plus ardent dans son affirmation, qu'il a été plus loin vers le colonisateur. Est-ce une coïncidence si tant de chefs colonisés ont contracté des mariages mixtes? Si le leader tunisien Bourguiba, les deux leaders algériens Messali Hadj et Ferhat Abbas, si plusieurs autres nationalistes, qui ont voué leur vie à guider les leurs, ont épousé parmi les colonisateurs? Ayant poussé l'expérience du colonisateur jusqu'à ses limites vécues, jusqu'à la trouver invivable, ils se sont repliés sur leurs bases. Celui qui n'a jamais quitté son pays et les siens ne saura jamais à quel point il leur est attaché. Eux savent, maintenant, que leur salut coïncide avec celui de leur peuple, qu'ils doivent se tenir au plus près de lui et de ses traditions. Il n'est pas interdit d'ajouter le besoin de se justifier, de se racheter par une soumission complète. (Memmi (1957)/1985: 151).

Chapter 4
The Subversion of Colonial Ideology: Jean-Paul Sartre

It is time now to look in greater depth at one of the key French figures in the history of anticolonialism, Jean-Paul Sartre. There is no denying the importance of Sartre in the theorisation of colonialism and anticolonialism, as well as in the politics and practice of the anticolonial struggle, not least for his recognition that this was not a subsidiary issue, but one that was absolutely central to twentieth-century history. In many ways, Sartre has to be considered as one of the pioneers in the history of European thought in this area, and much of the contemporary and subsequent work that has been done on this question, particularly, though not entirely, in Europe, has relied heavily on some aspects of his thought and returned to it as an essential foundation for much that was to follow. There are inevitably aspects with which later thinkers would disagree, as well as contradictions and limitations that need to be recognised. However, it is also necessary to give full credit to his courage in consistently affirming positions that were based on a fundamental commitment.

His most important, most original theoretical contribution consisted in his philosophical theorisation of the Other and in particular the colonial Other. The theorisation of the Other rejected and subverted the universalist problematic of the Republican Enlightenment model that had been promoted as the ideological rationalisation of the French colonial enterprise. However, it also has to be seen as part of his preoccupation with formulating a moral anthropology, concerned with the realisation of Humankind as a species, in the longest-term view of History, both written with a capital H.

At the same time, his practical political commitment to the anticolonial struggle, particularly in respect of Algeria, was equally important in the political context of the time. This work was the product of his engagement with real history in the making and was characterised by a hard-nosed, practical, political understanding of the current situation. As well as his own work on this question, however, it is also important to recognise his role in acting as a conduit for the ideas of others active in the anticolonial struggles, and his contribution in making their views known and published through the review *Les Temps Modernes* and other channels.

Although these two facets were often convergent, there is no denying that they were sometimes at odds. In particular, the political requirement to take a clear-cut stance to identify with a particular camp in the struggle (in Sartre's case, the anticolonial camp), along with the espousal of its ideas, could sometimes lead to contradictions with his own basic theory.

There is a third aspect that deserves to be signalled, and that is his analysis of the specificity of French colonialism, particularly his analysis of the French colonialist system in Algeria, which was first delivered as a speech to a meeting organised by the 'Comité d'Action des Intellectuels contre la poursuite de la guerre en Afrique du Nord', at the Salle Wagram in Paris on 27 January 1956, and then published in *Les Temps Modernes* under the title, 'Le colonialisme est un système' (Sartre 1956) and reproduced in *Situations V* (Sartre 1964: 25–48). This analysis of the specific economic and political features of French colonialism in Algeria is notable on at least two grounds. First, it makes clear the overriding importance and central role of Algeria in French imperialism; Sartre's critique of colonialism is the critique of French colonialism in Algeria. Secondly, it implicitly calls into question the universal applicability of Lenin's theory of imperialism, particularly with regard to the export of capital.

In this text, Sartre quotes Jules Ferry as a precursor of Lenin in the theorisation of the economics of colonialist imperialism:

> This time, it is capitalism itself that becomes colonialist. Jules Ferry would become the theorist of this new colonialism: 'France has always had an abundance of capital at her disposal and has exported it abroad in vast quantities. It is thus in France's interests to consider the colonial question from this perspective. What is at stake for countries like ours, which are destined by the nature of their industry to export on a grand scale, is the fundamental question of markets … Where you find political predominance, there you will also find the predominance of products, economic predominance.' You see, Lenin was not the first to define colonial imperialism: it was Jules Ferry, this 'great man' of the Third Republic. (Sartre 1956: 1373)

There are clear political differences between the two. Moreover, Ferry was not actually arguing for the export of capital to the colonies. The benefits of doing so were too uncertain and the profits would take too long to return. Sartre was quite clear on Ferry's policy, which was to create new industries in France itself, the products of which were to be sold in the colonies.

> What was entailed? Creating industries in the conquered lands? No way: the capital of which France had such an 'abundance' was not going to be invested in some underdeveloped country; the returns were too uncertain and the profits would take too long to achieve, as everything would have to be constructed and equipped. And even if it could be done, what would be

the point of creating from scratch production facilities that would be in competition with metropolitan industry? Ferry is very clear: capital will not leave France; it will simply be invested in new industries that will sell their manufactured goods to the colonies. The immediate consequence of this was the establishment of the Customs Union (Union douanière 1884). This Customs Union is still in existence. It ensures that French industry, which is handicapped on the international market by its excessively high prices, retains a monopoly on the Algerian market. (Sartre 1956: 1373–74)

Who was going to buy these goods? Not the Algerians, who lacked the resources to do so, but a new kind of artificially created consumer, in the shape of the French settler, who was given every advantage and subsidy to enable him to acquire land, from which to produce foodstuffs and raw materials for the metropolitan market. Both sides of this trade were thus safeguarded through a rigid protectionist system.

Sartre does not develop the theoretical implications for a more general analysis of imperialism and, indeed, the value of his analysis lies in its very specificity, in explaining some of the very particular parameters of the Algerian case. One might nonetheless deduce from the above that the relative backwardness of the French industrial economy, compared with that of Britain, Germany and the United States, at the time of its imperial expansionism could provide some explanation for its specificity at the level of economic relations.

However, the specific issues that are perhaps more interesting here relate to Sartre's theorisation of the Other and the significance to the development of his thought of tensions between the universal and the particular.

Sartre and the Theorisation of the Colonial Other

It is evident that, in the context of the prevailing consensus of the time, based on the Enlightenment and Republican ideologies, Sartre's theorisation of the Other in general, and of the colonial Other in particular, emerged as a radically original attempt to break with these dominant perceptions. Indeed, he developed his ideas outside and in complete disregard of the universalist Enlightenment tradition. One of the key elements that Sartre developed in his theory of the Other was the importance of the visual, through the notion of the gaze, *le regard*. These two aspects are closely related to each other.

The gaze, in its simplest form, is the relationship of the subject, the voyeur, to the object of the gaze. The act of looking at another person transforms this person, the Other, into an object, a thing, determined and fixed by the gaze of the seeing subject. So far, this is a one-way process, in which the relationship is simply that of the subject to its object. And, although that may be the end of the matter, as it is possible to see without being seen, nonetheless the dialectic of the gaze implies, at the very least, the possibility of a reciprocity, in which the Other is not only the object of the subject's gaze, but also a subject who, in their turn, looks back at the *voyeur*, thus constituting the original subject as object.[1]

This theory was developed in *L'Etre et le néant* (Being and Nothingness), above all in relation to the freedom of the individual subject and the capacity to act without restriction or a priori determination. In this context, the gaze of the Other was a constant threat to this freedom, even more so as there was the risk of succumbing to the temptation to enter into a complicity with the Other, in seeing oneself through their eyes. This self-determination via the gaze of the Other was a stratagem to escape one's own *angoisse*, amounting to an abnegation of one's freedom and a complicity in the process of the transformation of the self into a thing. This scenario, whereby we 'grasp ourselves from outside, as though we were another person or a thing', is set out in the following passage taken from *L'Etre et le néant*:

> Such is the whole set of processes by which we attempt to hide our own *angoisse* from ourselves: we grasp our own potentiality while avoiding consideration of other potentialities, which we ascribe, as their potentialities, to an undifferentiated other: we do not wish to see this potentiality as sustained in being by a pure annihilating freedom, but we attempt to grasp it as though it were brought into being by an object that is already constituted, which is no other than our Ego, envisaged and described as the person of the other. Of our primary intuition, we would like to retain the sense that it gives us of our independence and responsibility, but it also means that we play down anything in it which is part of the original annihilation; besides we are always ready to take refuge in the belief in determinism, if this freedom weighs too heavy upon us or if we need an excuse. Thus, we take flight from *angoisse* by trying to grasp ourselves from outside, as though we were another person or a thing. What is usually called revelation of the inner sense or primary intuition of our freedom is not original in any way: it is a process that is already constructed, expressly designed to hide our *angoisse* from ourselves, the actual 'immediate given' of our freedom. (Sartre (1943)/1994: 78)

Thus far, it has been a question of the individual. At this stage, Sartre says that any attempt to turn the gaze back upon the Other is always doomed to failure, although this assumes that the goal is solely to gain insight into the Other's subjective consciousness (Sartre (1943)/1994: 419–20). The possibility that such a reversal may bring about a change in the Other's subjectivity, as well as that of the subject, leading to the possibility of new relations of solidarity or a change in the relations of power, was largely ignored. It was later that Sartre was to relate his theory of the gaze to the precise significations with which it was loaded when linked to definite power relations of domination and subordination, arising from social factors, rather than as a phenomenon limited to an individual's consciousness.

When Sartre comes to develop his theory of the collective Other, particularly in *Réflexions sur la question juive* (Reflections on the Jewish Question), published in 1946, and then the *Critique de la raison dialectique* (Critique of Dialectical Reason), published in 1960, its links with the notion of ideology become more obvious. The

subsumption of the self beneath the gaze of the Other follows a similar process to that described in some theories of ideology, including that developed by Louis Althusser (Althusser 1970, 1976), as the imposition of ready-made ideological perceptions and values from the outside on more or less willing subjects, who then appropriate them and identify with them as constituting part and parcel of their own identity.

In *Réflexions sur la question juive*, Sartre recognises that individual freedom and self-determination are subject to the influence of socio-economic, political and cultural factors at the level of collective society (Sartre (1946b)/1954: 14–15). However, the development of his concept of *mauvaise foi* into a fully developed theory of ideology is found above all in the *Critique de la raison dialectique*, where he explains the genesis of particular ideologies as an effect of a process of generalised alienation, in which each person becomes Other by taking their opinion from the Other and thinking it as Other; in which public opinion, or the Idea, has become a process with an invincible force, not because it is the conscious moment of anybody's praxis, since no one actually thinks it, but rather because it is a 'practico-inert' object, not susceptible to verification or modification in this domain of the Other.[2] More specifically, for our purposes, it is in this text that he develops his theory of colonial ideology (Sartre (1960)/1985: 406, note 1, 798–813), in which, in the form of racial superiority, it acts as the cement of the 'serial unity' of the colonists:

> Colonialism defines the exploited as eternal, because it is itself constituted as eternal exploitation. In so far as this inert sentence passed on the colonised becomes the serial unity of the colonists (in its ideological form), i.e. the link of their otherness, it is the idea as Other or the Other as idea; it thus remains as Idea of stone but its force comes from its ubiquitous absence. In the form of this otherness, it becomes racism … In reality, racism is colonial self-interest lived as the thing that links all the colonists of the colony through the serial flight of their otherness. (Sartre (1960)/1985: 406, note 1)

It is clear from the above that this position is based on very different premises from those underpinning the dominant ideological consensus based on Republican universalism. Indeed, Sartre's analysis of colonial ideology does not take as its object the specificity of the 'official' colonial ideology, founded on the theories of the Enlightenment; it bypasses altogether the importance of this ideology in the imaginary representation of the relations between coloniser and colonised, thus dismissing it as of no real account. And yet, while not engaging directly with it, Sartre nonetheless provides a devastating critique of it on the theoretical plane by bringing to the fore the question of difference. His position is thus based on a very different foundation from that of the shaky edifice of what might be called a phoney universalism. Not only does Sartre highlight the difference between coloniser and colonised, but he also points to Europe's responsibility in accentuating difference and division in the colonies. As he writes in his preface to Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de*

la terre (The Wretched of the Earth), 'Europe has multiplied divisions and oppositions, manufactured classes and various forms of racism, in an attempt to use every means to instigate and increase the stratification of colonised societies' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 7–8).

Sartre's great merit is to uncover the reality of the colonial relations, which are experienced in the colonial consciousness through representations that derive from ethnic and racial conceptions, rather than the universal doctrines of Enlightenment ideals. His analysis takes as its starting point the exclusion of the Other from the collective made up of the French colonists. He presents this collective in its stark particular reality, as it is lived and experienced, without confronting this reality with the mythical discourse of Republican ideology. His analysis of the reality of French colonialism thus strips away the usual ideological forms to target conceptions that were common currency in the more transparent official ideology of British imperialism.

It is significant that the overt racism implicit in the colonial gaze in Sartre's analysis and reflecting the reality of the colonial relation is also present in much of what passes as orientalism. The importance of the visual element of orientalism is clearly demonstrated, not only and most obviously in the domains of art, but also in anthropology and literature, as well as in some forms of religion, where the notion of the gaze and the image play an essential role. Indeed, there is a sense in which universalism and orientalism form a couplet in French colonial discourse, in which the orientalist conception of the Other forms the necessary correction to the universalising discourse of the Republic. Given that there is no space for the notion of difference or the Other within the discourse of the indivisible French Republic, it is in these other practices that the visual comes to the fore, with the representation and/or conceptualisation of the Other through the practice and theory of vision. It should be remembered that vision depends on the division of subject and object, the self and the Other.

Indeed, the nature of the visual relation, as one of fundamental inequality between the subject and object of the gaze, makes it eminently suitable as a vehicle for the expression of the relation between coloniser and colonised, in which the actual reality of this relation can be articulated. This aptness is reinforced by the possibility of a complete absence of reciprocity in the relation of the voyeur to the object of the gaze; the latter may indeed be completely unaware even that he/she is being looked at or spied upon.

This fundamental inequality which is intrinsic in the form of the gaze is, moreover, reinforced by the colonial relations of power, where the voyeur is always the European and the object of the gaze the non-European Other. It is an inequality based not on difference alone, but on a fundamental opposition between the subject and the object of the gaze: the object is perceived as the absolute opposite, the negation of the subject. On the most fundamental level, there is a relation of mutual dependence between the colonist and the colonised Other, in which the colonist is defined in his relation with his Other, who represents the negation of everything that characterises him, as in a mirror reflection. This analysis was later taken up by

Edward Said, who defined the orientalists' conception of the Orient as the negation of the West, but then went on to demonstrate the determining role that this negative reflection plays in the constitution of European identity, by defining it exclusively in relation to its Other (Said 1978: 7, 39).

In this perception of the Other, there is always a value judgement that determines the Other to be inherently inferior. The power to see and thus, ultimately, to know and to pass judgement remains the prerogative of the subject of the gaze, the European voyeur. Within the terms of the colonial perception, it is inconceivable that the colonised Other may also have the right to gaze upon his/her master. It is highly significant, in this connection, that in Algeria there was actually an offence of *l'outrage par regard*. Indeed, in 1945, an Algerian schoolteacher was sentenced to two years in prison for this very offence, for looking at the sub-prefect of Medea and causing him outrage thereby (Suret-Canale 2001).

Nonetheless, this possibility of returning the gaze does exist. It is integral to the relation and is destined to be subversive of it.

The notion of the subversion of the gaze is an important one in the context of the anticolonial struggle and more will be said about it shortly. However, if Sartre's theorisation of the gaze and the colonial Other remains probably the most original element of his contribution to the understanding of colonialism, it nonetheless has to be seen in the context of his understanding of the role played by the repressive violence that was a key element of colonial rule.

Colonial Ideology and Repressive Violence

The implicit exposure of colonial ideology in theoretical terms had as its counterpart the more explicit acknowledgement of the role of force in maintaining the colonial system. There is a strong case for arguing that there is here an intimate connection to the emphasis on the visual in Sartre's analysis of colonial ideology. On the one hand, his theory of the Other undermines and subverts the 'official' discourse of universalist Republicanism. At the same time, he consistently downplays the importance of ideology per se in the maintenance of colonial power, with the argument that the colonial system rests primarily on the foundation of brute force. The little importance that is given to ideology, and consequently language, is not an omission but a necessary corollary of his analysis.

In 'Le colonialisme est un système', Sartre laid bare the economic foundations of the colonial system, as far as Algeria was concerned. He also showed that the system was only maintained through the use of violence and gave little weight to the role of ideology in maintaining the status quo.

For one thing, he pointed to the fact that most Algerians were in fact excluded from participation in French education and French culture and therefore remained largely uncontaminated by any ideological indoctrination. 'As for our famous culture, who knows whether the Algerians had any great desire to acquire it? But one thing is for sure and that is the fact that we refused to give it to them' (Sartre 1956: 1380). With an illiteracy rate of 80 per cent, the extent of any ideological

indoctrination was in any case bound to remain limited. Not only were the majority of Algerians denied education in the French language, even literacy in Arabic was not encouraged and the Arabic language was officially considered to be a foreign language.[3] We shall see that, even with regard to the French language, it is a striking fact that significantly more Algerians have been taught French since independence than was ever the case before. For instance, writing in 1983, Xavier Deniau claimed that there were four times as many French nationals teaching in Algeria than in the time of colonisation (Deniau 1983: 102).

Sartre had also pointed out that the secularism that was a major pillar of the French Republic at home was not a feature of French rule in Algeria, where there was no real separation of religion and state, with the French authorities endeavouring to control Islam and to make use of the most backward features of the religion through the fostering of superstition and obscurantist practices.[4] For Sartre, therefore, French colonial ideology, especially in the form of the 'civilising mission', could have no role to play in maintaining French power; the logic of the system was such that force increasingly became the only option left for the colonists. As he says in the preface to *Les Damnés de la terre*: 'Our Machiavellianism has little hold over these highly conscious people who have cottoned on to one after another of our lies. The only recourse left to the colonist is force, or what remains of it; the only choice for the native is that between servitude and sovereignty' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 9). This reliance on force is accentuated by the contradictions of the colonists themselves. As Sartre pointed out, the colonists were 'Republicans' in France, *'chez nous'*, i.e. within the context of French metropolitan institutions. In Algeria, on the other hand, they were fascists who hated the Republic and only loved the Republican army (Sartre 1956: 1384).

Yet the fact of the military presence itself served to tighten the circle further. As the repression made the colonists more detestable, so the military presence became more necessary, along with the necessity for an overthrow of the system by revolutionary counter-violence. The system thus contained the seeds of its own inevitable destruction; it prepared its own downfall through its own necessary intransigence.[5]

This point was reinforced by the economic implications. As Sartre says, in 1956, the costs of the war to the French state were estimated at 300 thousand million francs per year, a sum that was equivalent to the total Algerian revenue. His necessary conclusion was that the cost of maintaining the colony would outweigh the economic benefits that it brought and that the struggle would necessarily be abandoned when the burden became too great (Sartre in Memmi (1957)/1985: 37). Moreover, any real reform to make assimilation a fact, rather than an ideological premise, would in fact have destroyed the whole basis on which the colonial system was founded.

Yet, if Sartre dismissed the importance of ideology for the maintenance of colonial power, it was nonetheless given more weight by many of the colonised themselves, not just as a tool of repression, but also as an essential factor in the anticolonial struggle. Aimé Césaire, speaking in 1956 at the same meeting of the

'Comité d'Action des Intellectuels', emphasised the point that colonialism was not just maintained by force, but also through what he terms the *'confiance'* of the colonised peoples, a *'confiance'* that has been betrayed. This is what he had to say:

> We have reached the moment, when all over the world peoples who have hitherto been passive or resigned are now rising up to affirm that the time is now past for a world founded on the imposition of racial hierarchy and the oppression of the peoples of the world.
>
> It would be wrong to become blasé about this and say that after all this is nothing new, that it has always only been by force that empires have been kept in being and that force will continue to hold sway for a long time yet. The truth is very different. The truth is that for decades the colonised peoples have tried to have trust, have believed that they should have trust and have in fact been trustful. Their conquerors spoke such fine words! They spoke of the rights of man, of freedom, of justice, of civilisation, and lord knows what else! They proclaimed their universal mission.
>
> Now, out of the sheaf of dramas that constitute the colonial problem, the most important drama, the one with the greatest consequences, is perhaps not the initial drama of colonial conquest, but rather the drama represented by the betrayal of trust. I mean by that the trust that all colonial peoples, without exception, have been led to invest in the colonial power and that has always, inexorably, been betrayed.
>
> Well! We are now at a moment in history when all the colonial peoples, without exception, have learnt from bitter experience and are refusing their trust and are telling the world that they no longer have any trust. (Césaire 1956: 1367)

Sartre had also written about the ideological dimension to colonialism before, particularly in 'Orphée noir' ('Black Orpheus'), his preface to Senghor's anthology of black poetry, published in 1948. Here, he recognised that the black poets had been through a process of acculturation in white schools, though, in this text, the main thrust was to bring out the resulting alienation and exile from their own culture:

> The herald of the black soul has been schooled by the whites, according to the ancient iron law, which denies to the oppressed any weapon other than those he has stolen himself from his oppressor; it is in this white culture shock that his negritude moves from the level of immediate lived existence to become an object of reflection. Yet, at the same time, it also means that he has, to a greater or lesser extent, stopped living it himself. By choosing to see what he is, he has become his own double; he no longer coincides with himself. On the other hand, it is because he was already exiled from his own self that he felt this duty to speak out. He begins then with exile. A double exile in which the exile of his body offers a splendid mirror image of the exile of his heart. (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xv–xvi)

He sums up this alienation in the physical image of 'the walls of white culture that stand between her [Africa] and him [the black], *their* science, *their* language, *their* customs' (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xvi).

In the Preface to *Les Damnés de la terre*, Sartre also dwelt on the ideological dimension, especially as it affected the manufacture of elite minorities of the colonised to serve as intermediaries between the colonisers and the colonised, again stressing the cultural and linguistic alienation that this process brought in its train, making these intellectuals into *mensonges vivants*, 'living lies'. Eschewing the stark realities of the colonies, the European elite aspired to create a 'native elite'. From adolescence, the candidates were singled out, branded on the forehead with the principles of Western culture, sent off to France to be gagged by fine, cloying words and phrases stuffed down their throats, and then sent home again in their altered state.[6]

In the first stage, it was a one-way process, with the Word 'loaned' from France to the colonised,[7] serving in effect to deprive them of their own voice, to 'gag' them. But Sartre also talks of the various stages by which this colonised elite began the process of talking back, at first to criticise the contradictions between the colonists' own values and their actual practice,[8] then to raise the contradictions within the European discourse, particularly that between the purported universalism of the humanist ideology and the actual exclusion and stigmatisation entailed in racist ideas and practices,[9] and finally to question the applicability of the European values to the reality of their own lives. With Fanon and those inspired by similar ideas, this process would go even further; they would simply turn their backs on the European discourse, as of no relevance to their situation.

The *reprise de parole* by the colonised, the regaining of their voice, was an important element of the anticolonial struggle.[10] However, neither the ideological alienation of the colonised nor their subsequent rediscovery of their own voice figures largely as a central feature of Sartre's own theory, although he acknowledges this aspect, especially when commenting on the work of the colonised intellectuals. The originality of his theoretical contribution with regard to the colonial question lies elsewhere; it is mainly articulated through the notion of the gaze, not through the role of language and ideology.

The Subversion of the Gaze

We have seen that the essential characteristic of the colonial gaze is to deny any possibility of reciprocity. Yet a constant element in Sartre's thought is the ever-present option of refusing the self-definition of the subject, both as individual and as collective subject, by the Other. This applies equally well to this case. Thus, there is always the option for the colonised Others to turn the gaze back on to the colonisers, transforming them, in their turn, into Others, objects of their gaze.

In fact, this reversal of the gaze, which heralds the beginnings of the anticolonial struggle, forms the second moment in a dialectic of the gaze, which is closely modelled on that of the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the slave, or more accurately of the lord and the bonded servant (Hegel (1807)/1977: 111–19). The reversal of the gaze does not, of course, suffice on its own to eliminate the colonial

system. For this, the full espousal of counter-violence to meet the violence of the colonial power was deemed necessary.

The second moment is a necessary development in this dialectic, in which the supremacy of the coloniser is doomed in advance. For just as colonial violence could not be pursued to its conclusion, i.e. to the death of the colonised, whose labour is essential to the colonist, so too the process of dehumanisation, which is one of the effects of this violence, cannot be fully completed, because the colonist needs to acknowledge the colonised as men, in order that they may serve his own ends. Thus, Sartre dismisses as vain what he calls a 'petrified ideology', which attempts to portray the colonised as 'talking beasts'. To be able to give them orders, to get them to work, however brutal the regime, their basic humanity has to be acknowledged; a man cannot be 'treated like a dog' unless he is first held to be a man.[11]

As if in a mirror image, violence inevitably begets violence; so too, attempts to dehumanise the 'native' lead to the dehumanisation of the colonial master.[12] The counter-violence of the colonised, on the other hand, provoked by the power and the impotence of the colonist, enables them to realise their own humanity.[13]

As Sartre said, Fanon showed that violence was not wild savagery reborn or an outburst of instinctual resentment: it was man reconstituting himself as a human being, 'c'est l'homme lui-même se recomposant' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 15). Thus, Sartre endorsed Fanon's position that only violence could overcome violence; only through violence could the colonised overcome his neurosis to become a free man.

> For, in the first stages of the revolt, it is necessary to kill: killing a European is like killing two birds with one stone, getting rid in one throw of both an oppressor and one of the oppressed: afterwards there remains a dead man, but also a free man; the survivor feels he is treading on his own national land for the very first time. (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 16)

This is still only the second moment of the dialectic of the anticolonial struggle and, for Sartre, it was also important to recognise the specificity of race as an integral element of this second stage, which he categorises as the moment of 'separation' or 'negativity'. Already in 'Orphée noir', Sartre had made his view clear that what he called an 'anti-racist racism' was an essential phase if differences of race are to be abolished. It was not sufficient to proclaim the unity of the oppressed in the same struggle. In the colonies, it was essential for the colonised to first assert their own specificity and wage their own specific struggle against racist oppression before this ultimate unity could be achieved (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xiv).

This was a position that Memmi, amongst others, was later to take up with his notion of 'counter-racism'.[14] However, all credit must be given to Sartre for taking this position long before it became fashionable to do so and against the dominant positions of the Left at the time. The European Left, both socialist and communist, shared the refusal to acknowledge that the specific exploitation and oppression of the colonised peoples might entail the need for specific struggles against racism and any talk that smacked of separatism was anathema.

Moving on now to the third moment of the dialectic becomes more problematic, for much of what Sartre posited as the next stage remained at the level of myth or wishful thinking about some kind of a grand synthesis, in which humanity would finally realise itself and the previous differences and negations be subsumed into a fully reciprocal, fraternal vision of a new type of human society.

The notion of the 'new man' came into its own, on the one hand, as a counterweight to that of the old 'European' man, who achieved his humanity at the expense of the colonised and the enslaved.[15] Now, in a reversal of the process, Europeans have ceased to be the subjects of history; they have become its objects. Europe was portrayed as a sinking ship.[16] A 'new man', a 'better-quality' man was in the process of being created, out of the violence of the Algerian and other struggles, which was a necessary part of the birth process.[17] And, indeed, this kind of rhetoric, regarding the creation of a 'new man' and a 'new society', was common currency in Algeria in the war years and post-independence period (Benrabah 1999: 93–96; and see Chapters 5 and 6).

Ultimately, however, Sartre had in mind a more inclusive conception of the new human species, which would not just be 'the sum total of the inhabitants of the planet but the infinite unity of their reciprocity' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 19–20). For Europeans to be part of this, they would have to put aside their particular garb of European superiority, or as Sartre put it: 'This is the *end* for us … we will only be able to be part of this totality, from which we are banished by the black gaze, if we tear off the uniforms and badges of our whiteness in an effort simply to be human (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xi). This was about becoming human, not superhuman in the Nietzschean sense. Sartre's vision was akin to that of Marx (at least that of the early Marx of the 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (Marx 1975)). It looked forward to the first realisation of the humanity of the species, which had hitherto consisted of subhumans.

There would be much to say about Sartre's later views of this anthropological humanistic goal, as well as his apparent (if contested) disavowal of his unconditional support for political, revolutionary violence (Sartre and Lévy 1991: 63–64). However, its relevance is only marginal to the present question, given the importance and influence of Sartre's earlier positions, as set out here, and the lack of resonance that any supposed changes of heart were to have.

The rest of this chapter will explore other problematical areas of Sartre's thought relating to colonialism and the anticolonialist struggle. These include some of the issues relating to the question of language, issues relating to the dialectic of the universal and the particular and, finally, the contradictions that may have arisen because of Sartre's own position as a Frenchman.

The Word and the Gaze

Some of these problematical issues arise in connection with the primacy of the gaze in Sartre's theorisation of the colonial relation, in comparison with the role accorded to ideology or the Word.

In 'Orphée noir', Sartre had already talked about the gag being removed from black people, but, more especially, he concentrated on the notion of the 'return of the gaze'. Returning the gaze could only be done once the bowed heads are raised, as the following passage shows:

> Did you think that once these heads, which our forefathers had forced to bow down to the ground, were raised you would see only adoration in their eyes? Here are black men standing erect and looking at us and I hope that you can feel, as I do, the sensation of shock at being seen. For three thousand years the white man has enjoyed the privilege of seeing without being seen; he was pure gaze, the light of his eyes drew out everything from the native obscurity, the whiteness of his skin was still a gaze, made up of condensed light. The white man, white because he was a man, white like the day, white like the truth, white like virtue, illuminated creation like a torch and uncovered the secret, white essence of beings. Today these black men are looking at us and our gaze is sinking back into our eyes; it is the turn of black torches to light up the world and our white heads are no more than little paper lanterns tossing in the wind. (Sartre in Senghor 1948: ix)

Yet, on reading this passage, it has to be said that it is simply not true that blacks had only now been able to look at whites after 3,000 years. Blacks had always looked at whites, whenever they were involved in a relation, even if the whites were unable to see it or were sublimely indifferent to it because of their confidence, reinforced by racist ideology, that only their gaze counted. The difference is that, in the anti-imperialist struggles, the blacks were now articulating this reversal of the gaze through the white man's language, displaying it to the white man, writing in his language.

However, Sartre also claimed that the poems of Senghor's black anthology were not written for 'us'; any shame that 'we' might feel upon reading them is unintentional (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xi). He insisted that they were written by blacks for blacks, and, of course, they were. Yet the fact that they were written in French and published in France cannot be dismissed so easily, nor can the fact that the black French-reading public was actually quite limited in number. The *prise de conscience* by the black poets was in fact only one step in the process; the next was to assert themselves to their French colonisers and thus throw the poetry and the language back in the face of the oppressor. The writing of most of this poetry for a purely black audience is inconceivable.

Consonant with Sartre's concentration on the gaze was his dismissal of ideology and the little importance he actually gave to the word or to language in his theorisation of the Other. In this connection, the purely visual approach that he adopted to the question of whiteness and blackness is also significant. For colour only acquires its significance through connotations, which are created through language and ideology; there is no inherent significance in the actual visual manifestation of colour. Furthermore, the absolute whiteness and blackness, which feature in language, do not exist in reality, where there are only shades of white, pink,

yellow, brown and black. Whiteness and blackness acquire their moral, ideological and political connotations through the signification that they have acquired in the language of culture and ideology. Moreover, there is nothing absolute about these meanings: black and white are both used as the colour of death and mourning, depending on the country concerned; both white and black are considered the colour of modesty in dress and virtue, again depending on the culture.

What is perhaps even more problematic is the link that Sartre established between language and the nation. On the one hand, this was a clear critique of the much-vaunted universalism of the French language. In Sartre's view, the French language was closely linked to the particularity of the French nation and French national identity. The learning of the national language was a major factor in the acquisition of a national identity (Sartre (1943)/1994: 558–59).

This link between language and national identity was brought out very clearly in 'Orphée noir', where Sartre claimed that the independence struggles of most ethnic minorities in the nineteenth century were also focused on an attempt to resuscitate their national languages. In addition to belonging to a collective with its own economic and political autonomy, it was also necessary to think of oneself as part of this national collective and, for Sartre, this meant thinking in the national language. He gave the example of Ireland, where he asserted that those who claimed to be Irish did not just need to belong to an independent economic and political entity, but also to think Irish, which meant thinking in the Irish language. As he said, 'the specific characteristics of a society correspond exactly to those expressions in its language that cannot be translated'.

The fact that the black poets had to use French to spread the word of their struggle seemed a major limitation to Sartre. Yet, given the upheavals and dispersal of the slave trade, amongst other factors, black people did not have a common language and were thus forced to use the language of the oppressor to call the oppressed to unite. Within the confines of the French Empire, the use of French would ensure the widest audience amongst the black peoples. Yet this was not without its difficulties. The use of French to proclaim their rejection of French culture meant that the black writers were 'taking with one hand what they were pushing aside with the other'. Inevitably, this meant allowing the thought machinery of the enemy to lodge in their brains. Moreover, the syntax and the vocabulary of the French language, forged as they were in other times and climes, for different needs and to denote different objects, were not appropriate tools for the black writers to speak of themselves and their own concerns, hopes and desires. Following Mallarmé, Sartre described the French language as 'goose-fleshed, pale and cold like our skies', 'the neutral language par excellence', in line with the French national spirit, which required the toning down of loud colours and flamboyance. This was the language in which the poets of Negritude were to 'pour the fire of their skies and their hearts'. As an analytical language, corresponding to the analytical nature of French thought, the French language might be singularly inapt to articulate black consciousness, given that the 'black genius' was most probably synthetic in character. Although the term *négritude* itself was one of the rare black contributions to the lexicon of the

French language, it remained inadequate to express the other sub-analytical concepts and perceptions of 'black consciousness', for which the words were simply lacking in French (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xvii–xviii).

There is much in this, which is open to debate, including the essentialism implicit in the concept of the 'Negro', as set out here. With regard to language, Sartre went on to state that French was not a foreign language for the 'Negro', as he had been taught it from a very early age (though clearly this could only apply to the elite minority who went to French schools). He claimed that there was no problem with using it to talk of matters to do with technology, science or politics; the only problem was when it comes to speaking of 'himself'. Here, there would always be a slight hiatus 'separating what he says from what he would like to say': 'It seems to him as though a northern Spirit is stealing his ideas, gently inflecting them to mean more or less what he intended; it seems as though the white words are soaking up his ideas like sand soaks up blood' (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xix).

In this text, language was seen by Sartre as 'half signs and half things' ('à moitié signes et choses à demi'). This was a view that clearly saw an important ideological role for language, in addition to its role as a vehicle of communication, combining a measure of essentialism with instrumentality. He concluded by saying that, because of the difficulties of expression through this language, the poetry actually attempted to make the language disappear; it used it to create silence (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xx). The black poets were engaged in a process of destruction of the French language, or rather, as Sartre put it, 'defrancising' the language. One of the ways in which they did this was by breaking down the customary associations of words, particularly through the reversal of the usual hierarchical order of white and black (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xx–xxi).

This was also how he saw Fanon subverting the French language, inverting the normal subject/object order of discourse, by excluding the erstwhile French subjects from the dialogue altogether.

> A 'French-speaking' ex-native bends this language to meet new needs, puts it to use and addresses his words to the colonised alone: 'Natives of all the under-developed countries, unite!' What a comedown! For their fathers, we were the only people worth talking to; now the sons no longer think we are worth talking to at all. We have become the objects of the discourse. (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 7)

There is a clear tension here, between on the one hand the French language as a particular entity with its own essence and features, constituting an integral part of the French national identity, and, on the other hand, the potentialities that also exist to recreate it as an instrument that will suit a variety of multiple purposes.

In 'Orphée noir', Sartre had claimed that 'words are ideas'. However, this was not to say that he believed that thought was the same thing as language, or that it was reducible to it. He made this clear in a later interview in *Telos*, at a time when he was targeting the structuralist approach to language. Here he said that, for him

'thought never confounds itself with language. There was a time when thought was defined as independent of language, as something unknowable and ineffable, existing before expression. Today we make the opposite error. They wish us to believe that thought is only language, as if language itself were not *spoken*' (Sartre 1971: 111).

In a plea for a dialectical approach, he went on to propose two levels for language, a structural level, which he likens to an element of the 'practico-inert', and the other, the level of praxis:

> In reality, there are two levels. At the first level, language actually appears as an autonomous system which reflects social unification. Language is an element of the 'practico-inert', a sonorous matter united by a practical whole. The linguist takes this totality of relations as an object of study, and he has a right to do so since it is already constituted. It is the moment of structure, where totality appears as the thing without man, a network of oppositions in which each element defines itself by another one, where there is no term, but only relations of difference.

Sartre thus concedes that, at one level, language is constituted by its structures. Yet these structures themselves bear the mark of human activity and intervention:

> at the same time this thing without man is matter worked by man, bearing the traces of man. In nature you will not find oppositions such as those described by the linguist. Nature knows only the independence of forces. Material elements are placed one next to the other and act one over the other. But the lines of force are always external. It is not a matter of internal relations, such as that which poses masculine in relation to feminine or plural in relation to singular: that is, of a system in which the existence of each element conditions that of all others. If you admit the existence of such a system, you must also admit that language exists only as spoken, that is, in action. Each element of the system returns to a whole, but this whole is dead if every moment does not take it up and make it function. (Sartre 1971: 111)

Thus, there is always a second level to language, the level at which human activity, or praxis, comes into play.

> At the second level, it can no longer be a question of structures already there which will exist without us. In the system of language, there are some things that the inert cannot give alone: the mark of praxis. Structures impose themselves upon us only to the extent that they are made by others. Thus, to understand how a structure is made, it is necessary to introduce praxis as that totalizing process. Structural analysis must pass over to a dialectical comprehension.

The Dialectics of Difference: the Universal and the Particular

This dialectical approach is also evident in his discussion of the tension between the universal and the particular. One of the key features of Sartre's contribution in this domain is his subversion of the universalist discourse that was used in support of the French colonial project.

Sartre brought out quite clearly the way in which the economic foundations of the colonial system in Algeria were in fundamental contradiction with the universalist ideology of the French Republic, explaining how this led the pied noir colonists to oppose the political institutions of France and any extension to the colonised of the democratic rights which they enjoyed as part of the metropolis (Sartre 1956: 1383). These rights were only for the colonists and were only to be enjoyed in France, amongst French people. The universality of the metropolitan institutions, even if only formal, was anathema to the colonists. However, this was where racism stepped in, 'to counterbalance the latent universalism of bourgeois liberalism' (Sartre 1956: 1384). By relegating the colonised to the category of the subhuman, they were therefore not entitled to come under the aegis of the Declaration of the Rights of Man.[18]

In Algeria, there was no attempt at cloaking the labour relation in the guise of a free contract between equal human beings. In a situation of forced labour and military repression, the pretence of universal humanism was rejected. Away from France, the army rejected metropolitan universalism and worked on the principle that only a limited number of the world's population could qualify as part of the human race. In this way, the colonised were excluded and therefore exempted from the moral law that prohibited crimes against one's fellow man.[19]

This subversion of the universalist discourse, as far as Algeria was concerned, did not mean, however, that universalism per se had no role to play in Sartre's thought. What he was saying was that the universalism of the French political discourse was not in fact a reality; he was not necessarily opposed to it as a principle, as far as it went, which, in the context of Sartre's overall political positions, was not far enough, given its limitations as a result of its bourgeois character.

There are other domains in which Sartre was undeniably a universalist, particularly in his understanding of history and his own anthropological project, based on the notion of a progress towards the realisation of humanity.[20] And, although he viewed history to date as dominated by the European subjects of that history, he clearly saw the liberation struggles as an opportunity for the colonised to enter into history and thus make it truly universal for the first time (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 9).

He also had a clear belief in the universalism of knowledge, with its fundamental tenet that all human knowledge is available for the whole of the species and also its counterpart that there are no areas of human experience belonging to particular cultures or societies that are inherently closed to human knowledge. He was also part of the body of thinkers who believe that it is possible to explain the evolution of humanity and human societies through a single conceptual system and to elaborate a project that embraces humanity as a whole (Amin 1989: xi).

However, a belief in the universalism of knowledge does not imply uniformity, especially in the domain of culture, where Sartre had a clear understanding of the particularity of different cultures. This could at times lead to a tension in his thought, especially when the assumption of his own and others' historicity seemed to involve the adoption of a ready-made essence that seemed to be at odds with his position that there is no a priori essence.

Some of these difficulties were evident in his analysis of Negritude in 'Orphée noir', where, at one point, he referred to 'the irredeemable suffering that is the universal essence of mankind' (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xxxv). Yet, Negritude itself was not seen as an a priori essence, but as *'devenir'*, 'becoming', a moment in history, an enterprise, a future, a mission (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xxxix). Negritude was not universal in scope. Rather, there was a clear distinction to be made between race and class, which were not congruent, the former being 'concrete and particular', the latter 'universal and abstract' (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xl–xli). However, Negritude was a stage, albeit a particularist one, in a movement towards the universal.

Sartre spelled out the terms of the dialectic thus: the theoretical and practical affirmation of white supremacy was the thesis; the assertion of Negritude as an antithetical value represented the negation of this thesis. However, this negation was not a sufficient goal in itself. It was merely a stage in the preparation of the synthesis to come, when humanity would be realised in a society without races. Negritude had only come into being in order to be destroyed. It was a phase, not the end of the process, a means to an end, not an end in itself (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xli).

Thus, Negritude was far more than merely a celebration of atavistic instincts, looking back to the past. It also entailed the transcending of a situation. As Sartre put it, it was 'born from Evil', but 'pregnant with a future Good', existing in a state of tension between nostalgia for a past to which there is no real return and a future in which Negritude itself will give way to new values (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xliii).

Sartre quotes a poem by the Haitian poet, Jacques Roumain, who felt obliged, as a communist, to abandon his African identity to become a member of the international proletariat:

Africa, I have kept your memory Africa
you are in me
Like the splinter in the cut
like a fetish standing guard over the village
make of me the stone of the sling
make of my mouth the lips of your wound
make of my knees the broken columns of your degradation
yet
I only want to be part of your race
Workers and peasants of the world (quoted by Sartre in Senghor 1948 :xli)

In this scenario, to become part of the universal, international proletariat, the black man must 'tear out his heart', i.e. his race. Yet this is only one interpretation and one

that implies a very abstract form of universalism, against which might be set, for example, Aimé Césaire's more pluralistic variety of the universal concrete, 'riche de tout ce qui est particulier', in which all existing particularisms could coexist and act as a source of mutual enrichment (see Chapter 2).[21]

In Sartre's view of the dialectic between particularism and universalism, the black man was 'one who walked on a crest between the particularism of the past which he had just climbed and the universalism of the future which would be the twilight of his negritude; one who lived to the limit his particularism, to discover in it the dawn of the universal' (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xiii). This vision of universalism is one of the future; it has nothing to do with the universalism of the Republican discourse of the Rights of Man, which is not a project, but a statement of inherent rights, constituting part of the eternal human essence.

Sartre's analysis of Negritude clearly has its limitations, some of which are no doubt due to the historical form of the phenomenon itself. One can remain uncomfortable with the essentialising treatment of the black man or the Negro, as with the (stereo)typical view it presents of the black African male, ignoring differences amongst black people, not least those between men and women, the latter only figuring as the object of men's desire or as mother. However, this chapter will now move on to a discussion of Sartre's own position as a Frenchman, in an attempt to determine how far this particularity impinged on his work in this area.

Sartre the Frenchman

One thing that is striking about the more political of Sartre's writings is the extent to which he gives expression to the divide between 'us' and 'them', characteristic of writing about colonialism at this time. There are a number of questions that need to be posed. First of all, who are the 'we'? Secondly, what is the basis of this identification and why does it figure so largely in Sartre's work? And, finally, is it a problem?

There is no single answer to the question of who 'we' are, as the precise identification of the group in question changes from text to text. However, the basic collective identity with which Sartre identifies in these texts is as a Frenchman. Sometimes this French identity is subsumed within a larger European or 'white' identity. However, underpinning all this writing is the basic historical fact of Sartre's Frenchness and his identification with it.[22]

Now, this French 'we' does not always have precisely the same meaning for Sartre or cover exactly the same category of people. Sometimes, 'we' means the coloniser, as opposed to the colonised, in an understanding of the complicity of all French people in the colonial process. At other times, Sartre clearly intends the 'we' to exclude the *pied noir* colonists; 'we' signifies only the metropolitan French. Yet again, at the height of the opposition to the Algerian War, 'we' clearly signifies not even the metropolitan French as a whole, but the French opponents of this war.

What is nonetheless striking is that 'we' never seems to include the Algerians, or other colonised people as part of the collective identity. The 'us'/'them' divide remains integral to Sartre's discourse, mirroring that of the colonial view of the

Other. This was not the case with Césaire, whose position may be contrasted with that of Sartre on the 'us'/'them' binary divide. Not only did Césaire believe that the French people shared an inherent anticolonialism (Césaire 1956: 1366); he also believed in a common 'order' amongst nations, seeing the epoch of empire as a departure from this common order, to which Europe should now return (Césaire 1956: 1368).

The 'us'/'them' problematic comes through strikingly in Sartre's preface to Fanon's *Damnés de la terre*, a text that breaks completely with the distancing which Sartre could still achieve in respect of the French colonial administration, in, for example, 'Le colonialisme est un système' (Sartre 1956: 1380). This is particularly so in the way in which Sartre differentiates his 'we' from that of Fanon himself. Sartre, in his preface, specifically addresses his fellow countrymen – *'mes chers co-continentaux'* he calls them at one point (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 6). His preface has as its objective the enlightenment of his fellows; he wishes to persuade them that there is something in Fanon's book that is of relevance to them.

Fanon, on the other hand, is not addressing the Europeans at all, let alone as part of a collective identity with which he has any affinity; on the contrary, he is talking about them to his fellows, his 'brothers'. He is outside Europe and his view is from this outside. What is interesting are the terms Sartre uses to describe this 'scandalous' aspect of the book: 'par cette raison, son livre est scandaleux' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 7). This emotive expression may strike the reader as rather odd. For, if Fanon is telling it like it is, i.e. the truth, why should this be scandalous to the rational mind? It implies something in Sartre's gut reaction to the book, which, by making the colonised into the subjects and the colonisers the object of the discourse, threatened the very Frenchness in which he was rooted.

Throughout the preface, Sartre acts as the voice of the French coloniser, talking of 'our notorious crimes', 'our Machiavellianism', 'our lies' – no doubt with the intention of subverting this voice. Fanon, on the other hand, is portrayed as the voice of the Third World, 'their' voice, through which they are discovering themselves and learning to communicate to each other.[23] Its interest for 'us', the French, is that, in showing 'us' what 'we' have done to 'them', we will understand what 'we' have done to ourselves (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 7). Sartre then proceeds to address the 'Europeans' this time as *'vous'* not *'nous'*, urging them to open the book and enter into it: 'Européens, ouvrez ce livre, entrez-y.' Then, in the next paragraph, the *'nous'* reappears, though it is an oblique *'nous'* in indirect speech. The *'nous'* of those whom he was addressing is not a 'nous' in which he includes himself: 'In that case, you may say, let's throw this book out of the window. Why read it since it isn't written for us?' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 9–10). In the next sentence, he slips back into an identification, when he gives as one of the two reasons for reading it, the fact that Fanon 'explains you to his brothers and exposes for their benefit the way in which our alienation operates'; Sartre urges the European reader to take advantage of this to gain self-knowledge as the object of analysis. He then claims that 'our victims know us through their suffering and chains; this is what gives their evidence its credibility'. Thus, 'it is enough for them to show us what we have made of them, in

order for us to understand what we have made of ourselves'. Then again he reverts to the second person, *'vous'*, in an apostrophe, urging the French to become aware and ashamed of what is done 'in your name' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 10). Then, moving to the *'je'* form, Sartre comes out with what appears as a quite extraordinary statement, in which he claims, as a European, to be stealing the book of an enemy, to be able to use it to heal Europe.[24]

Why is this so extraordinary? The first reason is the fact that Sartre should take his identification as a European so far as to see Fanon as an 'enemy', even if this is for rhetorical effect. However, more crucial is the fact that what emerges from this text is not a primary concern with the problems and potentialities of the colonised, but a concern with the problems of Europe and the Europeans, with 'our' problems. At this point, it might be apposite to quote one sentence from his preface to Albert Memmi's *Portrait du colonisé*, in which he criticised him for not having given equal weight to the suffocating effect of colonisation on the colonists themselves, who were also victims of the system.[25]

While it is undoubtedly true that, as Sartre says, both the colonist and the colonised were to some extent 'victims' of the colonial system, some were undoubtedly more victims than others. This is something of which Sartre was fully aware, yet in many of these texts the effect on 'us' is promoted to the major concern, and it is true that his interest in the question of colonialism was inspired as much, if not primarily, by his concern for its impact on the French people, of which he was part. Indeed, he claimed that Fanon's book had no need of a preface, particularly as it was not addressed to 'us'. Yet he wrote one, precisely in order to take the dialectic to its logical outcome: 'we too, people of Europe, are being decolonised: this means that a bloody operation is taking place to cut out the colonist that is inside each one of us. Let us look at ourselves, if we have the courage, to see what is happening to us' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 18).

It was nonetheless unusual for Sartre to have any sense of identification with the colonist settlers in North Africa, and the division between 'us' and 'them' often comes across as that between the metropolitan French and the *colons* – the *pieds noirs*. In his preface to Memmi's book, he had compared the divide between the metropolitan French and the *pieds noirs* to the split between the north and the south in the United States, particularly for the claim by the southerners that only they knew the blacks and only they were qualified to speak about slavery and other issues related to it (Sartre in Memmi (1957)/1985: 31). Sartre pitches himself clearly on the metropolitan French side of the divide. Colonialism is in its last throes and the job of the French of the Hexagon (*'nous, Français de la métropole'*) is to hasten its demise. The *pieds noirs*, on the other hand, would stop at nothing to defend their system, demanding the sacrifice of young Frenchmen for the sake of racist and Nazi values and even undermining the French law and constitution to establish a fascist regime in France itself (Sartre 1956: 1386).

The *nous* here is the *nous* of the *Français de France*, who have the potential to resist this 'shame'. Just as there were French to fight against fascism in the Second World War, there were those, including many prominent artists and intellectuals,

who became involved in initiatives against the war and called the law into question: campaigns such as the 'Appel des 121', in which 121 intellectuals argued that desertion and civil disobedience were legitimate courses of action in the face of an unjust war; legal defence groups to defend those arrested, involving lawyers such as Jacques Vergès, Gisèle Halimi, Roland Dumas and many others; support networks, like the *réseau Jeanson*, or the one later organised by Henri Curiel, or the 'Nizan group', which gave practical help to those involved in the political and armed struggle (Hamon and Rotman 1979; Evans 1997).

However, just as the Resistance did not involve all the French, neither did the opposition to the Algerian War. Thus, Sartre's *nous* can sometimes be more restrictive, including only those French people who were active opponents of the war. In the 1980 conversations with Benny Lévy, where he reviewed his positions regarding the Algerian War, this was put very clearly, as was Sartre's deeply felt patriotism:

> It was the time when I was seeing a lot of Fanon, who was a profoundly violent man, and this certainly influenced the way I expressed myself. There was also the fact that we were in an awkward position, given that, after all, we were fighting against France and together with Algerians who didn't really like us very much, even though we were on their side. This put us in a rather odd position, which is reflected in this text, in the malaise, the extreme violence, the rigid stance adopted, because it wasn't easy at all. France is something that exists for me. I found it most disagreeable to be against my own country. (Sartre and Lévy 1991: 64–65)

In fact, Sartre made a clear differentiation between the Resistance and the opposition to the Algerian War. Unlike the Resistance, in which the intellectuals and the saboteurs were the same people, or at least in the same boat and interchangeable, this was not the case with the Algerian War, where the intellectual opposition in France was clearly not made up of the same people as those fighting on the ground in Algeria (Sartre and Lévy 1991: 65). Moreover, while he saw the Resistance's violence as a necessary evil, in the case of Algeria he claimed that he felt he had to go even further to give his support to the violence in order to compensate for the collective responsibility and guilt that he assumed as a Frenchman.[26]

There is no doubt that the 'us' and 'them' divide was fully in line with his philosophical approach to the Self and the Other and in contrast with the position taken by such as Césaire. The absolute opposition that it implied had the merit of reflecting the actual reality of the colonial relation; at the same time, it risked bringing a number of problems in its train. Not least of these was the problematic role in the anticolonial struggle for the 'us' in Sartre's sense, in which the question of identification was one of the key issues.

When Sartre acknowledged the validity of Memmi's distinction between the *'colons qui se refusent'* and the *'colons qui s'acceptent'*, this might be interpreted as a recognition of the freedom to choose not to accept one's given situation – as one might expect from him (Sartre in Memmi (1957)/1985: 32). However, he also said

that there are no good or bad colonialists – only colonialists, even if some refused to accept their objective reality; there was a collective guilt, which was inescapable.[27] Yet the definition of the collective was complicated by the fact that Sartre's 'we' did not extend to the *pieds noirs*. Thus, while he appeared to approve of Memmi's apparent solution, which Sartre said was to transcend his own particularity by seeking refuge in the universality of *'une Raison rigoureuse'* (Sartre in Memmi (1957)/1985: 32),[28] his own prime concern with the metropolitan French passed through a different trajectory, in which the notions of shame and then guilt were necessary staging points.

There are numerous examples in his writings of this sense of shame at being a Frenchman, a European or a white man, depending on the context, and the gaze of the colonised Other played a crucial role in producing this shame. For instance, a reading of the texts of the black poets transformed the European reality for the white man into something 'accidental', no longer the norm, in which the grandeur and dignity that were formerly found through the European mastery of the blacks and reflected in their meek, 'tamed' subservience was now shattered by the 'power of their wild and unbridled gaze which casts a judgement over our land'[29] or, put another way, 'the force of their calm, caustic gaze pierces us right through to the bone'.[30]

In Sartre's own case, however, it has to be said that the return of the gaze provoked not just the shame of which he spoke, but also a positive desire to overcompensate for the colonial process. This was evident in his outright commitment to a violent solution in the anticolonial struggle, as well as statements such as that when he claimed that 'black poetry in the French language is the only great revolutionary poetry today' (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xii).

His identification with the *nous* represented by the French people was essential to the task of bringing home to the French public the shame of colonialism. He saw this shame as a necessary stage in the realisation of what the colonial reality was and why the *nous* constituted by the French people, in which he included himself, was the legitimate target of the Algerian Revolution.[31] This undoubtedly represented a moral choice, at the same time as a political choice, implied by his fundamental anticolonialist stance. For fundamental to his position was the notion of the collective guilt of the French people, all of whom had benefited from colonial exploitation and were therefore implicated. Indeed, he went further to say that 'we are all exploiters'; 'we have taken the gold and the minerals, then the oil from the "new continents" and brought it back to the old metropolitan homelands' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 18). This included the French Left, and indeed all those whose talk of humanism masked a core racism. All were in the same collective camp and would be treated the same by the Algerians fighting for their freedom.[32] Sartre saw no contradiction in the existence of a racist humanism, since 'the European has only achieved his humanity by creating slaves and monsters' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 18–19).

This notion of collective guilt acquired some of its relevance in connection with a past that was still very much in the recent memory of the French, the experience of the Second World War and the moral issues it had raised. However, it also had implications that carried forward into a future that has become our present.

Thus, in spite of the contradictions endemic in the dialectic of universalism and particularity, especially in respect of Sartre's own identity and specific historicity as a Frenchman, the notion of collective guilt, as developed by him, could provide a starting point for the development of a political analysis of the role of those who have hitherto benefited from the North/South divide, in a global strategy to bring about change. As Sartre left it, it remains predominantly a moral concept, whereas what are at stake are no doubt economic, political and, to a lesser extent, cultural issues, which require economic, political and cultural solutions.

Sartre's major importance to anti-imperialist thought certainly lies elsewhere, in his theorisation of the colonised Other and the possibilities of subversion of the colonial relation. On a different plane, his legacy also lies in his exemplary value as a committed intellectual. His political involvement was, unquestionably, closely tied to national liberation struggles, yet he himself had no theory of the nation as such. Indeed, his own national identity as a Frenchman was never seriously questioned, but was rather taken as a given. Where he talked about it at all, it was largely defined in terms of his self-identity being mediated through the French language. Thus, in spite of the great input and influence of Sartre's theoretical work (even when unrecognised as such), it was for others to develop the theoretical dimension of the national liberation struggles themselves.

Notes

1. 'C'est que, en effet, autrui n'est pas seulement celui que je vois, mais celui *qui me voit*' (Sartre (1943)/1994: 266).

2. Les *opinions* de l'opinion publique se forment à la manière de la Grande Peur, en tant que chacun se fait Autre par son opinion, c'est-à-dire en la prenant *de l'Autre*, parce que l'Autre la pense en tant qu'Autre, et en se faisant informateur des Autres. A ce niveau, l'Idée est processus; sa force invincible lui vient de ce que personne ne la pense, c'est-à-dire qu'elle ne se définit pas comme le moment conscient de la *praxis* – c'est-à-dire comme dévoilement unifiant des objets dans la temporalisation dialectique de l'action – mais comme un objet pratico-inerte dont l'évidence s'identifie pour moi à ma double incapacité de la vérifier et de la transformer chez les Autres. (Sartre (1960)/1985: 406).

3. On compte aujourd'hui encore 80% d'illettrés en Algérie. Passe encore si nous ne leur avions interdit que l'usage de notre langue. Mais il entre nécessairement dans le système colonialiste qu'il tente de barrer la route de l'histoire aux colonisés; comme les revendications nationales, en Europe, se sont toujours appuyées sur l'unité de la langue, on a refusé aux Musulmans l'usage de leur propre langue. Depuis 1830, la langue arabe est considérée en Algérie comme une langue étrangère; on la parle encore, mais elle n'est plus langue écrite que virtuellement. (Sartre 1956: 1380).

4. pour maintenir les Arabes dans l'émiettement, l'administration française leur a confisqué leur religion; elle recrute les desservants du culte islamique parmi les créatures à sa solde. Elle a maintenu les superstitions les plus basses, parce qu'elles désunissaient. La séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat, c'est un privilège républicain, un luxe bon pour la Métropole. En Algérie, la république française ne peut se permettre d'être républicaine. Elle maintient l'inculture et les croyances de la féodalité, mais en

supprimant les structures et les coutumes qui permettent à une féodalité vivante d'être malgré tout une société humaine; elle impose un code individualiste et libéral pour ruiner les cadres et les essors de la collectivité algérienne, mais elle maintient les roitelets qui ne tiennent leur pouvoir que d'elle et qui gouvernent pour elle. En un mot, elle *fabrique* des 'indigènes' par un double mouvement qui les sépare de la collectivité archaïque en leur donnant ou en leur conservant, *dans la solitude de l'individualisme libéral*, une mentalité dont l'archaïsme ne peut se perpétuer qu'en relation avec l'archaïsme de la société. Elle crée des *masses* mais les empêche de devenir un prolétariat conscient en les mystifiant par la caricature de leur propre idéologie. (Sartre 1956: 1380–81).

5.   'L'unique bienfait du colonialisme, c'est qu'il doit se montrer intransigeant pour durer et qu'il prépare sa perte par son intransigeance' (Sartre 1956: 1385–86).

6.   Aux colonies la vérité se montrait nue; les 'métropoles' la préféraient vêtue; il fallait que l'indigène les aimât. Comme des mères, en quelque sorte. L'élite européenne entreprit de fabriquer un indigénat d'élite; on sélectionnait des adolescents, on leur marquait sur le front, au fer rouge, les principes de la culture occidentale, on leur fourrait dans la bouche des baillons sonores, grands mots pâteux qui collaient aux dents; après un bref séjour en métropole, on les renvoyait chez eux, truqués. (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 5).

7.   'Il n'y a pas si longtemps, la terre comptait deux milliards d'habitants, soit cinq cent millions d'hommes et un milliard cinq cent millions d'indigènes. Les premiers disposaient du Verbe, les autres l'empruntaient' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 5).

8.   'les voix jaunes et noires parlaient encore de notre humanisme mais c'était pour nous reprocher notre inhumanité' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 5).

9.   'vous faites de nous des monstres, votre humanisme nous prétend universel et vos pratiques racistes nous particularisent' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 6).

10. As Césaire was to say: 'Cela signifie la parole donnée et pour la première fois depuis 1830 au peuple algérien, et l'assurance qu'il pourra librement orienter ses destinées' (Césaire 1956: 1370).

11. une idéologie pétrifiée s'applique à considérer des hommes comme des bêtes qui parlent. Vainement: pour leur donner des ordres, fût-ce les plus durs, les plus insultants, il faut commencer par les reconnaître; et comme on ne peut les surveiller sans cesse, il faut bien se résoudre à leur faire confiance: nul ne peut traiter un homme 'comme un chien', s'il ne le tient d'abord pour un homme. L'impossible déshumanisation de l'opprimé se retourne et devient l'aliénation de l'oppresseur: c'est lui, c'est lui-même qui ressuscite par son moindre geste l'humanité qu'il veut détruire; et, comme il la nie chez les autres, il la retrouve partout comme une force ennemie. Pour y échapper, il faut qu'il se minéralise, qu'il se donne la consistance opaque et l'imperméabilité du roc, bref qu'il se 'déshumanise' à son tour. (Sartre in Memmi (1957)/1985: 36–37).

12. 'Ils ne connaissent, disiez-vous, que la force? Bien sûr; d'abord ce ne sera que celle du colon et, bientôt, que la leur, cela veut dire: la même rejaillissant sur nous comme notre reflet vient du fond du miroir à notre rencontre' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 10).

13. Ne vous y trompez pas; par cette folle rogne, par cette bile et ce fiel, par leur désir permanent de nous tuer, par la contracture permanente de muscles puissants qui ont peur de se dénouer, ils sont hommes: par le colon, qui les veut hommes de peine, et contre lui. Aveugle encore, abstraite, la haine est leur seul trésor: le Maître la provoque parce qu'il cherche à les abêtir, il échoue à la briser parce que ses intérêts l'arrêtent à

mi-chemin; ainsi les faux indigènes sont humains encore, par la puissance et l'impuissance de l'oppresseur qui se transforment, chez eux, en un refus entêté de la condition animale. (Sartre in Fanon (1961/ 1987: 12–13).

14. See Chapter 3.

15. 'l'Européen n'a pu se faire homme qu'en fabriquant des esclaves et des monstres' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 19).

16. 'C'est la fin, comme vous voyez: l'Europe fait eau de toute part … que nous étions les sujets de l'histoire et que nous en sommes à présent les objets' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 20).

17. Nous trouvons notre humanité en-deçà de la mort et du désespoir, il la trouve au-delà des supplices et de la mort. Nous avons été les semeurs de vent; la tempête, c'est lui. Fils de la violence, il puise en elle à chaque instant son humanité: nous étions hommes à ses dépens, il se fait homme aux nôtres. Un autre homme: de meilleure qualité. (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 17).

18. Le colonialisme refuse les droits de l'homme à des hommes qu'il a soumis par la violence, qu'il maintient par la force dans la misère et l'ignorance, donc comme dirait Marx, en état de 'sous-humanité'. Dans les faits eux-mêmes, dans les institutions, dans la nature des échanges et de la production, le racisme est inscrit; les statuts politique et social se renforcent mutuellement puisque l'indigène est un sous-homme, la Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme ne le concerne pas. (Sartre in Memmi (1957)/1985: 34).

19. 'Nos soldats, outre-mer, repoussent l'universalisme métropolitain, appliquent au genre humain le *numerus clausus*: puisque nul ne peut sans crime dépouiller son semblable, l'asservir ou le tuer, ils posent en principe que le colonisé n'est pas le semblable de l'homme' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 11).

20. Sartre's conception of progress and history at the end of his life were recorded in the controversial and disputed conversations with Benny Lévy:

Je supposais que l'évolution par l'action serait une série d'échecs d'où sortirait, imprévu, quelque chose de positif qui était déjà contenu dans l'échec, mais ignoré de ceux qui avaient voulu réussir. Et que ce sont ces réussites partielles, locales, difficilement déchiffrables par les gens qui ont fait le travail, qui, d'échec en échec, réaliseraient un progrès. C'est comme ça que j'ai toujours compris l'histoire. (Sartre and Lévy 1991: 35).

21. Sartre had his own interpretation of pluralism in relation to universalism, which he defines in connection with his own writing:

J'écris, et les pensées que j'offre aux gens par écrit sont universelles. Mais elles ne sont pas plurielles. Elles sont universelles, c'est-à-dire que chacun en les lisant formera ces pensées, bien ou mal. Mais elles ne sont pas plurielles, en ce sens qu'elles ne sont pas produites par une rencontre de plusieurs personnes et ne portent la marque que de moi seul. Une pensée plurielle n'a pas d'entrée privilégiée; elle est abordée par chacun à sa manière; elle n'a qu'un sens, bien sûr, mais que chacun produit à partir de prémisses et de préoccupations différentes et dont chacun comprend la structure par des exemples différents. (Sartre and Lévy 1991: 42).

22. Sartre's view of his own historicity, at least in his last years, also encompassed the notion of a particular intellectual and religious tradition, i.e. a certain Christian theological one to which he belonged. As he is purported to claim, in the conversations with Benny Lévy: 'C'est ça ma tradition, je n'en ai pas d'autre. Ni la tradition orientale, ni la tradition juive. Elles me manquent par mon historicité' (Sartre and Lévy 1991: 28).

23. 'Bref, le Tiers Monde se découvre et se parle par cette voix' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 7).

24. 'Européen, je vole le livre d'un ennemi et j'en fais un moyen de guérir l'Europe' (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 10).

25. 'Il eût mieux valu, peut-être, montrer le colonialiste et sa victime pareillement étranglés par l'appareil colonial … qui, après avoir donné toute satisfaction aux colonisateurs, se retourne contre eux et risque de les broyer' (Sartre in Memmi (1957)/1985: 32–33).

26. Si je voyais et souhaitais les Algériens moins violents qu'ils n'étaient, je pactisais avec les autres Français: j'étais de nouveau repris par la France. Il fallait que je voie les Algériens comme des hommes malmenés, crucifiés par la France, qui battent contre les Français parce que les Français sont injustes. Et moi, je suis Français, je suis injuste comme eux, parce qu'il y a une responsabilité collective, mais, en même temps, j'approuve et c'est là que je me distingue de la plupart des autres Français, j'approuve ces hommes torturés de lutter contre les Français.

    B. Lévy: Violence verbale, parce que autoflagellation nationale?

    J-P Sartre: En partie, oui; en partie, certainement. (Sartre and Lévy 1991: 66).

27. D'abord qu'il n'y a ni bons ni mauvais colons: il y a des colonialistes. Parmi eux, quelques-uns refusent leur réalité objective: entraînés par l'appareil colonial, ils font tous les jours ce qu'ils condamnent en rêve et chacun de leurs actes contribue à maintenir l'oppression; ils ne changeront rien, ne serviront à personne et trouveront leur confort moral dans le malaise, voilà tout. (Sartre in Memmi (1957/1985: 35).

28. See Chapter 3.

29. Jadis Européens de droit divin, nous sentions déjà notre dignité s'effriter sous les regards américains ou soviétiques; déjà l'Europe n'était plus qu'un accident géographique, la presqu'île que l'Asie pousse jusqu'à l'Atlantique. Au moins espérions-nous retrouver un peu de notre grandeur dans les yeux domestiqués des Africains. Mais il n'y a plus d'yeux domestiqués: il y a les regards sauvages et libres qui jugent notre terre. (Sartre in Senghor 1948: x).

30. 'L'Etre est noir, l'Etre est de feu, nous sommes accidentels et lointains, nous avons à nous justifier de nos moeurs, de nos techniques, de notre pâleur de mal-cuits et de notre végétation vert-de-gris. Par ces regards tranquilles et corrosifs, nous sommes rongés jusqu'aux os' (Sartre in Senghor 1948: xi). Or, as one of the poems by Aimé Césaire put it: 'Ecoutez le monde blanc / horriblement las de son effort immense / … / Pitié pour nos vainqueurs omniscients et naïfs' (quoted by Sartre in Senghor 1948: xi).

31. 'Une telle négociation impliquerait évidemment qu'on reconnaisse ce que représentent ceux qui nous combattent: la réalité nationale algérienne' (Sartre 1956: 1352).

32. Dès que leur guerre a commencé, ils ont aperçu cette vérité rigoureuse: nous nous valons tous tant que nous sommes, nous avons tous profité d'eux, ils n'ont rien à prouver, ils ne feront de traitement de faveur à personne. Un seul devoir, un seul objectif: chasser le colonialisme par *tous* les moyens. Et les plus avisés d'entre nous seraient, à la rigueur, prêts à l'admettre mais ils ne peuvent s'empêcher de voir dans cette épreuve de force le moyen tout inhumain que des sous-hommes ont pris pour se faire octroyer une charte d'humanité: qu'on l'accorde au plus vite et qu'ils tâchent alors, par des entreprises pacifiques, de la mériter. Nos belles âmes sont racistes. (Sartre in Fanon (1961)/1987: 15).

Chapter 5
The Nation in the National Liberation Struggle

As we have seen, resistance to empire and to the different forms of imperial domination, exploitation and oppression had been present, both actively and passively, from the first stages of imperialism. It could be individual in scope or, more often, based on a collective linked by tribal, family, religious or regional loyalties. The process of transformation of these different movements offering sporadic, isolated, often spontaneous, resistance to the forces of empire into broader movements capable of mobilising the resources of an entire national community was a long one, often taking decades to mature. It required the development of a national consciousness, a national political leadership and a coherent strategy for conducting the struggle for national liberation. Throughout the course of the twentieth century, such developments were taking place all over the colonised world. While each particular national struggle had its own characteristic features and dynamic, none can be analysed in isolation. Just as the forces and structures of imperialism itself, whether French, British, Portuguese or Dutch, were inextricably bound together as part of a global economic and political process, so too was the development of national liberation movements dependent on mutual influence and interaction, conflict as well as cooperation, in the domain of ideas as well as on the ground. Moreover, the forces of nationalism did not develop under the impetus of their own internal dynamic alone. Indeed, their strengthening was often a direct consequence of the weakening of the forces of the imperial power and, even more importantly, a consequence of the perception of this weakness. The fall of France in 1940 and the subsequent German occupation were decisive in this regard, as was the overrunning of both the French and the British colonies of South-East Asia by the Japanese. The presence of German and Allied forces in North Africa and of the British in Syria and Lebanon also supplanted the power structure of the French, and the divisions between Vichy and the Free French increased the impression of weakness and vulnerability.

There were indeed divergences in theoretical analyses and ideological formulations in this burgeoning nationalist resistance, both between the movements of different countries and between internal forces with different perspectives. For

some anti-imperialist nationalists, the nation already existed; it was simply a question of reverting to the precolonial past. Others rejected nationalism altogether, choosing to see the unity of the collective in terms of shared religion or culture.

This chapter will examine some of the different theorisations of the nation and the struggle for national liberation, in their evolution and as they affected some of the countries within the orbit of the French Empire.

The Nation in the Modern World

The growth of nationalism had its origins in the countries of Europe at the dawning of the modern age (Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990). To some extent, the nation-state can be seen as a staging post in historical developmental terms, providing a factor of unity in the move away from feudalism's hierarchical organisation of local economic and political autonomy. The development of the nation-state was instrumental in freeing the economy from petty restrictions hindering its growth, thus allowing for the movement of goods and labour. On the political plane, the creation of the modern nation helped to bring about a new definition of the role of the individual and a reconfiguration of the relationship of the individual to the wider unit of community. The nation-state assumed that one of its functions was to serve the interests of its citizens, though obviously this required a new definition of the rights and duties of the citizens.

The notion of the wealth of nations was destined to be a temporary one on the route to economic development. It was an essential one nonetheless, with the nation fulfilling the role of a major instrument for the promotion of economic growth and prosperity, providing a protective banner under which the accumulation of riches could take place, until such time as the economy steamed forward into the international dimension.

The development of imperialism, along with the consequent rivalries and wars between the European powers, brought in further modifications to the functions and form of the nation-state. Adjustments were made necessary by economic and political crises, requiring the intervention of the state with new forms of organisation.

Ultimately, the challenge of the anticolonial liberation movements was to turn the ideology of nationalism against their colonial masters, long after it had ceased to be a progressive force in the metropolitan heartlands. It was thus one of the paradoxes of the nationalisms of the national liberation movements that they used the conceptual framework of the progressive, modernist ideas developed in the imperial countries to articulate the demand for freedom, independence, autonomy. At the same time, these nationalisms often mobilised the full gamut of reactionary particularisms and conservatisms to articulate their difference in opposition to the dominant imperialist power – to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the country. This might also include the rejection of science and reason, along with the assumption that science and reason were essentially universal human attributes.

In France, the development of the modern nation had taken on a particular shape, which was to prove highly influential in those countries under its influence.

Although the process of nation-building in France had begun under the *Ancien Régime* with the breaking down of autonomous regionally based feudal authorities and the establishment of a strong centralised, absolutist monarchy, at its apogee under Louis XIV, it took a significant leap forward with the French Revolution and the development of a totally new form of the nation-state, in both theory and practice.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, this new concept of the nation that came into its own with the Revolution was uniquely political in scope. It consisted of a body of people, linked together, not by any links to the land or ethnic ties, but by a common political status, summed up in the notion of citizenship, in which the citizen was defined solely in terms of an abstract, universal, political equality of rights and duties. We have also seen how it was but a short step to the subsuming of 'equality' under the more all-embracing concept of 'uniformity'.

The non-incorporation of difference within the political nation did not, however, make it disappear. Instead it was relegated to a private domain, either by the exclusion of certain differentiating factors such as religious affiliation from the scope of public political life, leading to the development of a secular ideology of the Republic, or through the non-inclusion of certain groups of people whose 'difference' did not qualify them for citizenship – notably of French women, on grounds of gender difference, for more than a century and a half after the French Revolution, and then of those subject peoples in the colonies, to whom the universal rights of citizenship were not extended.

The universalism implicit in the modern political concept of the nation was therefore a dual-edged instrument as far as the colonised were concerned. On the one hand, it had served to rationalise the colonial enterprise; on the other, it offered the apparent possibility of inclusion in full citizenship to the colonised, if only the colonising power would take its own rhetoric seriously. However, once both of these ideological selling points had been revealed for the illusions that they were, that was not the end of the matter. Indeed, it was at that point that the French-inspired modernist notion of the political nation was often at its most influential, as a source of inspiration for nationalist liberation struggles.

Of course, this was not the only form of nationalism to hold sway in France itself. The importance of biological and ethnic ties, as well as the notion of belonging to a particular piece of territory were to find new vigour throughout the course of the nineteenth century, leading finally to the ideology based on the notion of 'blood and soil', which eventually fired the development of national socialism, ethnic, religious and gender-based cleansing and other manifestations of a totalitarian view of the nation. By the end of the Second World War, nationalism was generally burdened with some very sordid and sinister baggage, arising from a chain of events, including the fallout from the jingoism of the Franco-Prussian war, the anti-Semitism associated with the Dreyfus Affair in France, the mindless slaughter of the First World War and the atrocities and obscenities of the Second World War. Moreover, the European Left had made the eschewing of nationalism an important part of their analysis, in which class solidarity across the national divides was seen as a vital part of a strategy for the international working class, even though the

internationalism of the socialist movement had been sorely tested and found wanting, first by the expansion of empire, in which the benefits of super-exploitation of the colonised workers and peasantry filtered through to the metropolitan working class to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the position of different sectors within the class hierarchy. The partaking, however meagre for some, in the benefits of imperialism tended to undermine any potential international class solidarity between metropolitan and non-metropolitan workers. Moreover, the strength of what was construed as an essentially French Republicanism also militated against a fully internationalist approach. Finally, any remnants of international solidarity that still existed between the metropolitan workers of Europe were largely crushed by the outbreak of the First World War and the jingoistic political reaction to it.

Internationalism and the Anticolonial Struggle

Now, there were indeed internationalists who attempted to withstand the general tide, such as Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and other critics of the collapse of the Second Socialist International as a result of the war. Yet, if Lenin agreed with Luxemburg's description of the German Social-Democratic movement as a 'stinking corpse' in 1914 (Lenin (1915b)/1972, (1915c)/1972, (1917c)/1970, (1917d)/1970, (1919a)/1977, (1920)/1971), this did not prevent him from recognising the right of nations to self-determination (Lenin (1914)/1970) or the role of nationalist movements in the fight against imperialism, which he saw essentially as a worldwide revolutionary process. Although there would be progress by stages, in different countries, Lenin considered that the revolution would only succeed as a truly international phenomenon (Lenin (1917a)/1974; see also Marx and Engels (1845–46)/1976, (1848)/1970), even though he had recognised the limited possibilities of 'socialism in one country' (Lenin (1915a)/1970). Just as Lenin had assumed that Russia would need to go through a bourgeois, or national democratic, revolution first before the proletariat would proceed to the socialist revolution, so too would the anti-imperialist struggles first have to pass through a national democratic, bourgeois revolution before socialism became a possibility. The national democratic revolution was thus seen as an essential phase, but not an end in itself. It was to be a milestone on the route of the process whereby the universal proletariat would achieve its socialist revolution.

In this analysis, therefore, the national liberation struggles, with their own particular nationalisms, were all part of the same universal process of world revolution. There is no doubt that this analysis was shared by many of those engaged in these struggles. It would be hard to exaggerate the mobilising force of the Bolshevik Revolution and the creation of the Soviet Union as a source of inspiration not just for the European working class, but also for the colonised, leading to the establishment of communist parties in the colonised world.

There is equally no doubt that not all anticolonial fighters shared this analysis. On the one hand, there were various types of reformist nationalism, which were content to leave the basic economic system intact, provided there could be a change

of management, giving the indigenous bourgeoisie their share of power. Other strands called on specific religious or cultural traditions, or new ways of thinking, to provide the mobilising tools for ridding the country of foreign domination. Islam was a powerful mobilising force for Muslims, who could call on a long tradition of militancy. On another tack altogether, Gandhi and his followers developed a specifically Indian set of principles for the struggle, which were based on long-standing traditional ways of thinking, as well as breaking with Hindu tradition in novel ways, notably on the question of caste.

However, even for those more inclined to accept that socialism and communism had something to offer to the colonised workers and peasantry, there were significant difficulties. Some of these arose from the problems that much of the European Left had with issues arising from imperialism and colonialism. This could mean that the benefits of subscribing to their version of a socialist/communist-inspired global analysis could be outweighed by the patronising relations of subservience that often marred this vision. The theoretical analysis typical of the international communist movement that developed after the Bolshevik Revolution, especially in the 1930s, invariably put the interests of the universal proletariat before the interests of any specific group. Some, following the analyses of Mensheviks and some Trotskyists, insisted that it was the most advanced, most 'productive' sections of the universal proletariat who would form the vanguard of the world socialist revolution, i.e. the most highly skilled, highly paid workers in the metropolitan countries. In a bizarre distortion of Marx's labour theory of value, it was sometimes claimed that these workers were far more exploited than those in less developed industries and countries, given the high rate of surplus value, or rate of exploitation, which their labour in capital-intensive industries produced. Geoffrey Kay, for instance, claimed that 'the affluent workers of the developed countries are much more exploited than the badly paid workers of the underdeveloped world' (Kay 1975: 53). This was an argument that ignored the distinction between the rate of exploitation/surplus value and the rate of profit and, accordingly, the higher rate of profit produced from the labour of the workers in the underdeveloped country, in spite of the lower rate of surplus value, as Marx himself demonstrated in Volume 3 of *Capital* (Marx (1894)/1974: 150–51). It also ignored the difference between the (relative) rate of exploitation and the (absolute) volume of exploitation, a point also stressed by Marx in *Capital* Volume 1 (Marx (1867)/1970: 218, note 1; see also Amin 1989: 110).

Although there were those in the colonies who were prepared to subscribe to this type of analysis, often with the consequence of having to put off their own claims and demands until the time was ripe, it was nonetheless to prove increasingly galling, especially when it was promoted through the theorising of the metropolitan parties of the Left. In the practice of the communist parties, and particularly the French Communist Party, the universalism of the theory increasingly came to be translated into the prioritisation of the national interests of the Soviet Union (through the policies of the Comintern) and, to a lesser though important extent, the national interests of the colonising power. Although this was not always recognised or flagged up at the time of the national liberation struggles, there was a greater or lesser degree

of ambiguity towards the European-driven theorisation of imperialism and the strategy and tactics of struggle, even amongst those anticolonial fighters, sympathetic to socialism and its goals. This ambiguity was compounded by the fact that the institutional relationship between the colonised and the international communist movement was usually mediated through the agency of the metropolitan communist parties (see Chapter 2) – the French Communist Party oversaw the Communist organisations that were established in the territories colonised by France, as did the CPGB, in the case of the British colonies, most notably in the case of the Communist Party of India. While both communist parties adopted an anticolonialist stance in theory, this tutelage was not helpful to the aims of the nationalists in practice, reproducing as it did the imperialist relations of domination. Indeed, it was, more often than not, seen as an obstacle.

Nonetheless, the successes of communist-led nationalist movements in Asia at the end of the Second World War were to provide a powerful boost to the cause of national liberation inspired by socialist ideas elsewhere. The independent line followed by the Chinese Communists (who had never experienced the tutelage of European communism), leading eventually to the split in the international communist movement, made of them the champions of the struggle of the colonised. Although the origins of the Sino-Soviet split lay in the rejection by the Chinese communists of Khrushchev's critique of Stalin in his secret speech to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Party in 1956 (Ali 1984), the charges of revisionism were soon extended to the policy of 'peaceful coexistence', which was at odds with the Chinese promotion of worldwide anti-imperialist struggle. Ostensibly about differences in strategy and tactics in relation to the global revolution, culminating in the 25–point letter to the Soviet Party that sealed the split in 1963, what was really at stake was the worldwide leadership of the anti-imperialist movement.

In Vietnam, resistance was deep-rooted and well developed (Cooper 2001). It had taken a number of forms in the early part of the twentieth century, but it was the growth of a strong communist movement, following the foundation in 1930 of the Indochinese Communist Party by Ho Chi Minh, which put it in the forefront of the anticolonial struggle and made it the first to proclaim its independence at the end of the Second World War. There is no doubt that the Vietnamese communists saw their struggle as part of the wider international movement. Although Ho Chi Minh used the words of the American Declaration of Independence in his own declaration in 1945, it was to the international communist movement, and particularly the Soviet Union and China, following the coming to power of a communist-inspired regime in 1949, that the Vietnamese turned for support, and significant aid was given. Support was also forthcoming from communist sympathisers within the colonial armed forces, many of whom came from other French colonies, notably North and West Africa. Moreover, the European Left also showed its international solidarity – even more readily once the Americans became entangled in the conflict.

In Laos, the nationalist movement, led by two royal princes, Souphanouvong and Souvanna Phouma, had brought together two strands, the communist-inspired Pathet Lao and a more liberal strand associated with Souvanna Phouma. After the

Pathet Lao led the country to independence in 1953, Souvanna Phouma was the leader throughout most of the period of the Vietnam War, before the Pathet Lao, now reconstituted as the Patriotic Front, came back to power in the 1973 elections. This was not merely a question of internal politics. Increasingly, the countries of Indochina became embroiled as pawns on the front line of the conflicts of the Cold War (Regaud and Lechervy 1996). In the case of Cambodia, the difficulties of this period, together with the tensions inspired by the Sino-Soviet split, were to lead to the development of a particularly noxious strand of xenophobic obscurantism, ostensibly in the name of communism, with the Khmer Rouge coming to power with policies, strategies and a general mindset quite divorced from any reference to internationalism and intent on purging all foreigners, particularly the Vietnamese, and class enemies from both the party organisations and the country, leading to the physical annihilation of millions.

Where communism appeared to form the dominant ideology of the nationalist resistance to French imperialism in Asia, it had already been challenged and deserted by some of those colonial intellectuals who had made the obligatory passage via the French Communist Party. The Ivory Coast leader, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, had already abandoned attempts to forge an alliance between his RDA (Rassemblement démocratique africain) and the French Communist Party by 1951 and became an increasingly vociferous anti-communist in subsequent years (Amondji 1984; Nandjui 1995). Aimé Césaire left the Party in 1956 over the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary, explaining his position in his *Letter to Maurice Thorez* (Césaire 1957) before founding the PPM (Parti Progressiste et Martiniquais) in 1958. Others, such as his fellow Martiniquan and former teacher, Gilbert Gratiant, remained with the Party, while stressing the need to safeguard the Creole culture. René Ménil, a collaborator of the Césaires on the review *Tropiques*, also stayed and continued his critique of Negritude. Elsewhere, the younger Reunionese poet Boris Gamaleya combined a commitment to communism with a strong sense of the particular identity of his homeland.

In the case of Algeria, the relation of communism to the developing nationalist movement has been a complex one, particularly in organisational terms. The ENA (Etoile Nord Africaine), which was the first organised modern expression of Algerian nationalism, was in fact founded in Paris in 1924 by Abdelkader Hadj-Ali, who was a member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party. In its origins, the ENA was closely connected to the Communist Party. It was aimed specifically at those Algerian workers who were working and living in France (Stora 1989). Messali Hadj, who became its president in 1926, had also been a member of the French Communist Party. However, under his leadership, the ENA moved away from the Party and became increasingly transformed into a nationalist, anticolonial organisation. In 1927, Messali Hadj was the first Algerian nationalist to formulate the demand for independence. Ten years later, in 1937, he broke with the French Communist Party, following the dissolution of the ENA by the Popular Front government. Nonetheless, the movements with which he was associated, the ENA and then the PPA (Parti du peuple algérien) from 1937, the MTLD (Mouvement

pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques) from 1945 and the MNA (Mouvement national algérien) from 1954, were all defined by a mix of elements of Marxism with Arabo-Islamic ideology.

The Algerian Communist Party itself was founded in 1923 as an offshoot of the French Communist Party, eventually gaining independent status in 1936. In its origins, it was a party whose primary membership was made up of left-wing elements of the European population. Although the numbers of indigenous Algerians increased after 1936, and especially after Maurice Thorez's declaration of February 1939 to the effect that the people of Algeria were a nation in formation, not all the European members of the Party embraced this idea. The nature of its membership, combined with the tutelage of the French Communist Party, was to contribute to its sidelining in the development of the nationalist struggle, regardless of the militancy and courage of many of its members involved in the war of liberation. Of the Europeans involved in the PCA and sympathetic to the nationalist struggle, Henri Alleg is one of the most well known. Alleg was actually of Anglo-Jewish origins and had left France for Algeria in 1939, where he joined the PCA. After the Second World War, he became editor of *Alger Républicain* before it was banned in 1955. His subsequent depiction of his arrest and torture in 1957 in *La Question*, published by Editions de Minuit, was, along with the torture and death of Maurice Audin, to give an important boost to the anti-war movement (Alleg 1958; Berchadsky 1994). However, there were many others who were actively engaged in fighting with the Front de Libération nationale (FLN), including Henri Maillot and Maurice Laban, who were killed in the *maquis* in 1956, Fernand Yveton, guillotined in 1957 for attempting to blow up the Hamma gasworks and Raymonde Peschard, who died after being tortured and raped (Kastell 1997). The position of the PCA on the armed struggle has been cloaked in ambiguity and contradictory policy statements. Having condemned the insurrection at the outset and reiterated this condemnation at the beginning of 1955, the central committee allegedly reversed this policy after it met in secret at Bab-el-Oued on 20 June 1955, approving the involvement of communists in the armed struggle. This policy was in contrast with the policy of the PCF, which voted for the special powers asked for by the Mollet government in 1956.

After independence, the Algerian Communist Party disappeared as such, but regrouped in different forms and under different names in a semi-clandestine existence. Algerian communists have lived in a mostly uneasy relationship with the regime in power. When Boumedienne took power in 1965, the communists joined with other opposition groups. He did nonetheless attempt to win their support for his version of state socialism and programme of nationalisations, not surprisingly since communist influence has been highest in the trade unions. Throughout the post-independence period, communist organisations have not had any legal recognition and communists have been subjected to various degrees of persecution. Its oppositional stance is twofold – an opposition to both the existing power regime and fundamentalist Islamic ideology. The Party itself has changed its name several times – from PAGS (Le Parti de l'Avant-Garde Socialiste) to Ettahaddi, or Challenge, in 1993, and relaunching itself in 1998 as MDS (Mouvement Démocratique et

Social). It argues for an unashamedly modernist agenda, claiming that Algeria is still living in the pre-modern era. Its recently deceased leader, the veteran El Hachemi Cherif, saw history as moving forward in generally progressive fashion and described fundamentalism as 'a movement that is manifestly counter to the movement of history'.[1]

The Theorisation of the National Liberation Struggle – Frantz Fanon

In the aftermath of the Second World War, there were a number of factors that coalesced to create a new set of conditions for the furtherance of national liberation struggles, as well as the development of new thinking about related questions. On the historical, geopolitical level, the perceived weakness of the European colonial powers on the one hand, together with the emergence of the USA as an important new imperial power, the rising star of China in the Far East and the successes of the communist-led nationalists in Indochina all gave a boost to nationalist movements elsewhere.

However, each developing nationalist movement had its own specific dimension and dynamic. Each emerging nation asserted its own particular nationhood, more often than not in the face of the denial by French colonial doctrine of the existence of any such nationhood. Nowhere was this truer than in the case of Algeria, where it was denied that Algeria could be a nation, on the grounds that there had not been an autonomous Algerian state before 1830. This was an argument that had been put forward first to justify the original conquest and then, later, to argue against the Algerian nationalist cause. This could be interpreted in a number of different ways, depending on the definition used to characterise the nation. However, as far as 'Algerian' territory was concerned, there was very little ambiguity. The boundaries had been largely fixed under Ottoman rule and, indeed, accepted as such by the French, when they took over. To all intents and purposes, Algeria was already a 'nation-state' at the time of the French conquest, even if it was one under 'foreign' rule.

Paradoxically, it was the colonial power that contributed to the definition of the Algerians as a collective, through the common juridical status imposed upon them, which differentiated them from the French nation of citizens. Or, as Sartre put it, 'colonial society cannot assimilate them without destroying itself; it will therefore be necessary for them to identify as a unified collective against it. Those who are excluded will assert their exclusion in the name of their nationhood, for it is colonialism itself that creates the patriotism of the colonized' (Sartre in Memmi (1957)/1985: 29).

This objective categorisation did not, of itself, lead to the development of a nationalist movement. Nor did the subjective awareness and rejection of their condition by the colonised necessarily lead to nationalism. It could equally remain stalled at the level of individual revolt or collective reformism. The awakening of nationalist consciousness entailed, in addition, the recognition of their fundamental collective difference and the affirmation of the freedom of this collective to constitute itself into a national subject with the power to make decisions in all aspects of their political, economic, social and cultural existence, i.e. with political sovereignty. The national liberation movement is born along with the realisation that this can only be achieved by overturning the existing power relations and creating a new state.

A key thinker to emerge at this moment of history was the young Frantz Fanon, who had left his home in Martinique to fight with the Free French and then to study in France, becoming a psychiatrist and moving to a post in Algeria (Macey 2001). Fanon was to become a key theorist of the national liberation struggle, combining his experience of racism as an Afro-Caribbean and his professional experience of the psychological effects of colonialism with the experience derived from his commitment to the nationalist struggle in Algeria, for which he resigned his post at a psychiatric hospital in Blida. Fanon became not only the theorist of the Algerian Revolution in particular, but also of national liberation struggles worldwide. When he died of leukaemia in 1961 at the young age of thirty-six, he had written several key works, beginning with his analysis of the psychological damage done by racism and responses to it, with his own distinctive mix of personal and professional experience and insights, in *Peau noire, masques blancs* in 1952. His involvement with the FLN was reflected in his writings on the Algerian Revolution, particularly *L'An V de la Révolution algérienne*, published in 1959. His final work, *Les Damnés de la terre*, was completed only a few months before his death in 1961 and achieved worldwide resonance at the time, particularly amongst those engaged in liberation struggles.

There has, however, also been considerable confusion around his work. On the one hand, it was Fanon's interpretation of the Algerian liberation struggle that provided the prism through which many of those on the Left saw that struggle. It did not always correspond to the realities of the Revolution. Similarly, many came to an understanding of Fanon's work through the prism of Sartre's interpretation of it. Again, care is needed to disentangle what Fanon actually said from Sartre's gloss upon it.

There is a thread linking Fanon to some of the ideas put forward by his fellow Martiniquan, Aimé Césaire, and the other proponents of Negritude, who had spent their formative years as members of the French Communist Party. Like them, he pinpoints the issue of race, he highlights the importance of culture. However, he synthesizes his views on race, culture and the nation into a radically different perspective, which challenges all attempts to box him into mechanistic categories and all forms of reductionism of his thought to simplistic notions. With his predecessors, Fanon shared an overarching universalist perspective. However, whereas theirs had been inspired by the prospect of the victory of the universal working class and the realisation of socialism across the globe, with Negritude a stage, or a 'moment', in the dialectical march of progress, Fanon put the dialectic into a new historical perspective, in which it is all about the forms of struggle of an entire people against the colonial power, in which the constitution of nationalism and the national consciousness was a necessary step in the process of taking control of their own destiny. Necessary though it was, nationalism was, in Fanon's view, merely a stage, not an end in itself and the process of liberation itself paramount. His own experience of racism, and that of others, as well as the lessons he learned from the bitter colonial oppression and the implacable nationalist struggle in Algeria, combined to destroy any faith in the possibility of solidarity on the part of the international proletariat, or in the redemptive power of the working class per se, at least as presently constituted. His universal goal was thus not so much that of the

worldwide proletarian revolution, but the creation of a new type of human being, a 'new man'.

Fanon's analysis of Negritude is a complex one. On the one hand, he sees it as a product of the history of racial oppression, and accepts that, in its total 'unconditional affirmation of African culture' (Fanon (1961)/1987: 156) it is an inevitable gut reaction to the blanket racism of the white colonialists. He does not, however, subscribe to its logic and warns that, necessary though it has been, from a historical point of view, this 'racialised' view of culture, in which 'African' culture is promoted, rather than 'national' culture, will ultimately lead the supporters of Negritude into a dead end.[2]

At the same time, he refuses to accept that Negritude is merely a moment, a negative stage, in the overarching dialectic. Blackness is not something that should continue to be defined totally in relation to the whites (Fanon (1952)/1975: 88–89). Moreover, he takes issue with the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the servant, which, for him, is not applicable to the relation between the slave master and the black slave, where there is no reciprocity, where the master is profoundly indifferent to the recognition of the slave, only wanting his labour (Fanon (1952)/1975: 175, note 9), and where, ultimately, the slave, to achieve his liberation, must also become indifferent to the master. Where, in its classic Hegelian form, the dialectic is premised on a relation between two conscious minds, Fanon insists that, in the case of the relation between the white master and the black colonised/slave, the new racial dimension changes everything. In the eyes of the master, the black slave is never a thinking, conscious being; it is only his body that is seen. Just as the master could not care less about being recognised by the slave, so the slave in his turn will reciprocate this indifference. It will not be a question of seeking his recognition, or even of reversing the master–slave relation by replacing him as master. What the colonised/slave wants is to make the master disappear, to take over his farm and eject him from the land.

This rejection of the European model or paradigm applies not just to the Hegelian dialectic, but also to Freud. The Oedipus complex, Fanon says, is not universally valid. It does not exist in the black man (Fanon (1952)/1975: 123). As such, it is a construct of European social and cultural conditions and not a constituent component of a human essence.

Fanon's starting point was the alienated individual. Racism and the dehumanisation that was a key effect of colonialism had combined to produce this alienation, depriving the colonised of his/her humanity and transforming them into pure body, animal or thing. He had described this phenomenon in one of his first writings, an essay, 'The North African syndrome', first published in *Esprit* in 1952. These were 'creatures starving for humanity' (Fanon (1959)/1970: 13), 'emptied of substance', reified or 'thingified', by the coloniser 'calling him systematically Mohammed' (Fanon (1959)/1970: 24).

It was by engaging in revolutionary violence that these alienated colonised subjects would recover their humanity and become whole human beings. Although the problem of alienation was experienced at the individual level, the cure would

only be effective as part of a collective struggle. Indeed, Fanon saw these most alienated, these most wretched and exploited elements of society, the peasantry and the lumpenproletariat, mainly the landless peasants who had been forced off the land or drifted to the towns, as the main agency for change. The process of defeating colonialism and the process of healing their own damaged psyches were integral to each other. Violent revolutionary action would not only transform the colonial landscape; it would also enable them to achieve their own transition from the animal to the human state.

This was not a process that was limited to the Algerian nationalist struggle for freedom. In Fanon's view, this particular national liberation struggle was part of the wider struggle and had a vital role to play as the spearhead of the African revolution. It was not an end in itself, but a moment in a dialectic of universal liberation, which ultimately transcended politics with the emergence of a new, higher type of human being. It was not enough to work towards becoming a man. This man would be a new man, who would be a better man. Not only would this new man be cured from the alienation from which he had suffered, not only would the tensions between body and soul be reconciled, but he would also have moved to a new stage of humanity, on to a morally superior plane, in which the betterment of all aspects of the human condition would be the prime consideration. Or, as Fanon put it:

> More precisely, it would seem that all the problems which man faces on the subject of man can be reduced to this one question: 'Have I not, because of what I have done or failed to do, contributed to an impoverishment of human reality?' The question could also be formulated in this way: 'Have I at all times demanded and brought out the man that is in me?' (Fanon (1959)/1970: 13)

Fanon, of course, was not alone in his revolutionary humanism. His perspective is well in tune with the humanist historicism of Sartre, in which the influence of Nietzsche was notable,[3] as well as the ideas of the early Marx and the early Lukács. There is no doubt that Sartre and Fanon had an important reciprocal influence upon each other. At the same time, there was a critical edge to their appreciation of each other's thinking. Notably, Fanon disagreed with Sartre on the relativism implicit in the view of Negritude as a moment in a dialectic, which would be superseded by a synthesis in a society without races (Fanon (1952)/1975: 107–8). This is to rob the black man of his freedom and black consciousness is more than negativity: it is fully what it is.[4] However, Fanon was fully in tune with Sartre on the question of the progress of humanity from the 'subhuman' stage of history to that of total human beings, in which man would finally be realised (Sartre and Lévy 1991: 36–38). As we have seen in Chapter 4, Sartre defended Fanon's position on the redemptive power of violence.

Other key figures in the national liberation movements of the 1950s and 1960s had very similar perspectives. Che Guevara, in particular, dwelt on the notion of the 'new man'. For him, it was closely tied with the building of communism. As he wrote

in 'Socialism and Man in Cuba' in 1965, 'to build communism it is necessary, simultaneous with the new material foundations, to build the new man' (Guevara 1987: 250). The creation of the 'new man' was the further development of Lenin's argument regarding the necessity of a cultural revolution if socialism was to succeed. For Che Guevara, it entailed all aspects of human existence, not just the transformation of the political and economic structures. It implied a complete rupture with the past, to create 'a new world where everything decrepit, everything old, everything that represents the society whose foundations have just been destroyed will have definitely disappeared' (Guevara 1987: 185). This would require deliberate voluntaristic action on the part of each individual. This is what he said in a speech, 'Duty of Revolutionary Medical Workers', in 1960:

> almost everything we thought and felt in that past epoch should be filed away, and that a new type of human being should be created. And if each one of us is his own architect of that new human type, then creating that new type of human being – who will be the representative of the new Cuba – will be much easier. (Guevara 1987: 125–26)

Setting out his vision of 'What a Young Communist should be' in 1962, the parallels with Fanon's basic humanism are striking: 'every Young Communist must be essentially human and be so human that he draws closer to humanity's best qualities, that he distils the best of what man is through work, study, through ongoing solidarity with the people and with all the peoples of the world '(Guevara 1987: 184). In both cases, it remains a fundamentally universal vision of what humanism was all about, entailing a belief in the progress of humanity towards the formation of a new genus: 'Man as a wolf, the society of wolves, is being replaced by another genus that no longer has the desperate urge to rob his fellow man, since the exploitation of man by man has disappeared' (Guevara 1987: 367).[5]

However, for all that Fanon saw nationalism as a stage and not an end in itself, it was still part of his fundamental originality that during the time of the nationalist struggle it was to be the total priority, governing all aspects of social existence, including culture and the psyche. His emphasis on the importance of culture, as well as the impact on the individual's mental state of oppression and the struggle against it, marks a new departure from previous Marxist-inspired theories of imperialism and national liberation.

Moreover, the nationalist cause was not, in his view, subservient to the class struggle; he saw no special, a priori, leading role for the working class at national or international level. At the same time, unlike other nationalists who had refused to follow the socialist route to liberation through international proletarian solidarity, he did not represent the interests of the national bourgeoisie either. On the contrary, Fanon spoke for the most dispossessed and oppressed sections of society, emphasizing the revolutionary potential and needs of the peasantry and the lumpenproletariat, indeed, those who could truly be considered the 'wretched of the earth'. These were the people whom he saw leading the struggle, not the vanguard of the aristocracy of the working class.

The new priorities that he highlighted resonated with many of the 'wretched of the earth' or those speaking on their behalf across the globe. Not least of these was his emphasis on the intrinsic importance of violence in the liberation process. No longer seen as a means to an end, albeit a legitimate one, violence was more than a utilitarian tool in the struggle. Indeed, it was elevated to an essential process, through which the enslaved and the oppressed would achieve their liberation; it was given the status of a purifying agent, needed to cleanse the oppressed from the humiliation and defilement of colonial oppression. There was nothing inherently new in this belief in the redemptive power of violence. It formed part of the ideological mystique of the French Revolution. Georges Sorel had argued for a similar belief in the reinvigorating, creative power of violent action as a weapon against bourgeois decadence and repression (Sorel (1908)/1999), and a mystique of violence, often linked with religious ideology, had been part of the rationalisation of war, crusades and rebellions from time immemorial. It could also be used as an argument in support of some of the most questionable causes, with which Fanon would certainly have disagreed, including some of the violence taking place under the cloak of religious fundamentalism and the 'war on terror'.

His influence was immense, though mainly outside the francophone world. Indeed, his impact was probably greatest on the black populations of the metropolitan heartlands themselves. In spite of Fanon's own reservations, or rather ambivalence, about using blackness as a defining category in the struggle, under the slogan of Negritude, black consciousness or black power, he was certainly an inspiration to the Black Power movement in the USA, offshoots of which, such as the Black Panther Party, refused the non-violent methods adopted by the civil rights movement during the 1950s and early 1960s, to claim the need for violence in the affirmation of black power. Stokely Carmichael claimed Fanon as one of his 'patron saints' and Eldridge Cleaver noted that 'every brother on a rooftop could quote Fanon'. Despite differences of analysis and approach, which were acknowledged – not least, the significance of race as a mobilising category – the basic message taken from Fanon was threefold: his insights into the damage done to the psyche by racism; his insistence on the intrinsic value of violent struggle; and his belief in the necessity of organising the lumpenproletariat as the agency of change and the potential strength these 'lumpen' elements could muster if they were united.

There was no doubting the extent of the suffering and dispossession of this so-called lumpenproletariat in Algeria, which consisted mainly of those who had been driven from the land into unemployment in the towns and cities. As we have already discussed in the Introduction, the issue of land, its usurpation and reclamation, was a key issue in the struggles for national liberation.

The Reclaiming of Space

The clearest, indeed one might say the prime, objective of the national liberation struggles was the reclamation of the national territory. The anticolonial struggle was articulated first and foremost through the demand for the return of the nation's land

to the possession and control of the colonised from whom it had been appropriated. It was this objective that was prioritised over all others.

Although the land issue was the key issue in all the French colonies, it assumed the clearest expression in the case of Algeria. This was due to the fact that Algeria had not simply been invaded and occupied by a foreign power, but had ended up actually incorporated as an integral part of the French territory itself and had furthermore been colonised by a massive migration of European settlers, predominantly, but not exclusively, of French origin. The land question in Algeria was therefore to assume an even greater importance and carry an even greater emotional weight than it did elsewhere. As such, it plays an important role in the figures of the nationalist discourse, including the literature that was written during and after the war of liberation, and raises a number of problematic issues.

One of these related to the definition of what was to be counted as the national territory. In a sense, this was a common problem for many, if not most, of the territories colonised by European powers, the borders of which had often been drawn, and redrawn arbitrarily or artificially, depending on administrative convenience, the state of relations with neighbouring territories and the agreements made with rival imperial powers, particularly at the Berlin Conference of 1885, the Niger Convention of 1898 and the Entente Cordiale of 1904, often with scant regard for the ethnic composition of the peoples living in those territories (Suret-Canale 1988). Thus colonies were redefined, renamed or regrouped as part of broader entities, such as AOF (Afrique occidentale française) or AEF (Afrique équatoriale française), throughout the course of French colonisation.

A nation is not, of course, simply constituted by territory, administered by a 'national' state body. There are also the people inhabiting that territory, as well as the more elusive elements that give the nation its identity and the state its legitimacy. Thus, while the land issue was relatively straightforward, these other areas have given rise to severe ideological discord and indeed violent conflict. They will be dealt with in the following chapter.

Notes

1. 'Un mouvement manifestement à contre-courant du mouvement de l'histoire', quoted at MDS website, at http://assoc.wanadoo.fr/mds-immigration/site.htm.
2. 'Cette obligation historique dans laquelle se sont trouvés les hommes de culture africains de racialiser leurs revendications, de parler davantage de culture africaine que de culture nationale va les conduire à un cul-de-sac' (Fanon (1961)/1987: 157).
3. See Roberts 1993: 82, on Nietzsche's influence on thinking about the Algerian Revolution.
4. 'Toujours en termes de conscience, la conscience noire est immanente à elle-même. Je ne suis pas une potentialité de quelque chose, je suis pleinement ce que je suis. Je n'ai pas à rechercher l'universel. En mon sein nulle probabilité ne prend place. Ma conscience nègre ne se donne pas comme manque. Elle est. Elle est adhérente à elle-même' (Fanon (1952)/1975: 109).

5. This was written in 1964, just before what was known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was about to be unleashed in China, putting a new slant on the whole notion of cultural revolution and the 'new man'.

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Chapter 6
National Consciousness: History and Culture

Nationhood and National Identity

The demarcation of a territory and the establishment of the authority of a national state in this territory represent only part of the process of constructing the nation, which is as much to do with the subjective as with the objective factors involved in nationhood. The cluster of elements that make up the subjective side of nationhood are most often discussed in terms of the concept of 'national identity'. The notion of national identity, however, can be something of a catch-all basket into which all sorts of notions can be thrown. While there is no doubt that it can be used to cover many different aspects relating to the collective consciousness of a nation, its use is somewhat limited as an explanatory tool of analysis, and even less as an actual motive force in the development of the nation's history.

Indeed, the notion of national identity remains predominantly a static one, in which the nation is presumed to be what it is. In its turn, this usually, but not invariably, implies a degree of uniformity, in which national identity is taken to be the same for all citizens of the nation. National identity is thus often invoked with a conservative purpose in view: to maintain, or restore, the traditional elements that constitute this 'identity'. As such, it should be distinguished from the more dynamic, mobilising concept of 'national consciousness', which defines the coming together of the people as a collective subject with the common goal of a collective future project.

This is not to say that history and the way it is interpreted and evaluated have no role to play in constituting the national consciousness. Indeed, on the contrary, the understanding of the relation to history is a major, if not the most important, factor determining the way in which the nation perceives itself.

These issues were not merely academic ones for the colonised peoples engaged in struggles for national liberation. The success of the nationalist movements was closely connected with their ability to awaken national consciousness amongst their populations. In this, the definition of the nation and the national identity was of paramount importance and equally problematic in very many, if not most, of the colonies. Sometimes the question of national identity was articulated in bald terms

as a choice between the return to the past, to some kind of original, precolonial model, on the one hand, or the forging of a radically new nation with a project oriented towards the future.

In the different context of Basque nationalism, Aurélio Arteta has expressed the same basic choice thus:

> History is the realm of the dead; what matters is the present day. This is why I don't see the point of engaging in a historical debate, where, in any case, the separatists indulge in melancholic nostalgia for something that has never existed. Also, it is perverse to say that, as we have been in the past, so must we remain forever. In this scenario, there would no longer be any plurinational states and it would mean that the 'ethnic' or 'geographic' identity of 'peoples' is placed above any political, democratic identity. Democracy is not defined through the notion of belonging, but by that of election, or choice. (*Le Monde*, 5 March 1999)

In the reality of the national liberation struggles, this type of simple dualistic opposition was not at all appropriate. There was never any clear-cut choice between returning to a past that was already constituted and constructing a new vision of the nation. Even the past was constantly reconstituted through the work of memory and the appropriation and re-appropriation of history by successive generations. Moreover, the new could only be constructed on the basis of existing reality, in which the collective strands of the national memory had an important role to play. It was equally true that the 'difference', the particularity that defined the subjective view of the nation, could not be defined solely in terms of the past.

Nowhere was the question of nationhood more complex than in Algeria, where the issues raised during the development of the nationalist movement are far from being resolved today. Some of these issues have already been raised in the previous chapter, particularly in the context of the organisation of the national territory. There is also the question of the composition of the population occupying this territory, whose diverse origins reflect not only a varied indigenous population, commonly known as Berbers, but also the comings and goings of a succession of invaders and settlers, who have come to the Maghreb lands from ancient times, including Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Jews, Arabs bringing Islam from the East and, more recently, Jews and Muslims, expelled from Spain at the end of the fifteenth century, followed by a period of rule by the Ottoman Turks until 1830. Each group brought different cultural traditions, historical myths and narratives, which, together with significant geographical differences between the coastal communities, based in cities or farming on the fertile plain bordering the Mediterranean, and those living in mountainous and desert regions of the interior, led to a varied society, largely self-governing in tribal communities, with a measure of control through the administration in power at the time. The conquest of Algeria by France from 1830 and the subsequent introduction of a large settler population, not just from France, but from other countries on the northern borders of the Mediterranean, not only

made a further contribution to the ethnic diversity of the population, but also significantly disrupted and dislocated the traditional structures of the Algerian society and economy.

Ethnic and regional diversity in itself is not necessarily an obstacle to national consciousness and identity. Indeed, most modern nations have populations with diverse origins, as well as pronounced differences between the regions. Some, such as the United Kingdom, even incorporate several different nations within a broader British identity, though not always without problems. Different historical narratives and myths can complement each other to build up a hybridised version of the nation's history. This was undoubtedly the case in Algeria, where the burgeoning nationalist movement could call on myths of resistance relating to the Berberist past, such as those surrounding Jugurtha (Haddour 1999: 30–32), or the warrior queen La Kahina, as well as the resistance of the nineteenth-century national hero, Abdelkader. However, there was also no doubt that differences and divergences existed, which had the effect of perpetuating the fragmentation of Algerian society, as well as the lack of an overarching national historical narrative on which the emerging nation could draw, not to mention the fact that a sizeable section of the population was still prepared to work with the French, not least in the army and related formations.

At the same time, a number of factors were producing conditions favourable for a national consciousness to develop. Two factors were of particular importance, both of which were the result, direct or indirect, of French colonisation. On the one hand, the economic and social dislocation brought about by colonialism had the effect of taking many Algerians away from their tribal communities in the countryside and bringing them together with people from different villages and regions in the urban centres of Algeria, as well as, significantly, in France itself, where they realised that what differentiated them was of far less importance than what they had in common. Moreover, an important part of what they had in common derived from the collective negative category into which they were placed by the French, to whom all were, without differentiation, 'Muslims', 'natives', *'bicots'*, *'bougnoules'* and other derogatory epithets.

With the new stage in the nationalist struggle launched by the establishment of the FLN and the insurrection of 1 November 1954, the need for a more deliberate policy of fostering national consciousness through the promotion of a national political ideology became more urgent and required the adoption of clear-cut choices, regarding the form and content of this ideology.

Given the conditions that applied, it was not possible to posit a simple return to the precolonial past, given the lack of a truly national heritage. Neither was it possible to mobilise the nation around a modernist, political ideology alone, given the connections of this type of ideology with the rationalisation of French colonialism itself. To galvanise the nation and prepare it for the struggle, its specific characteristics, in terms of ethnicity, culture and religion, were also brought into play. Given that the French settlers also claimed to be Algerians, the Algerians themselves could only fully assume their nationhood by appropriating those elements of their

identity that had been pinned upon them by the colonisers to mark their difference. In other words, they built their identity on precisely those characteristics that the French had used against them to deny their Frenchness, and consequently citizenship – their religion (Islam), their ethnic origins (Arab) and their language (Arabic). These were the basic elements upon which they were mobilised to coalesce against the French common enemy, in a reversal of the terms in the polarised, binary opposition of coloniser and colonised.

The promotion of the notion of Algerian national identity as 'Arabo-Islamic' was a key mobilising tool throughout the period of the war and thereafter. On the one hand, it appealed to the religious sentiments of the vast majority of the population, as well as drawing on links with Arab nationalist struggles elsewhere in the Arab world, notably in Egypt, where Nasser's successful struggles against the British and French were a major source of inspiration. It was not, however, an unproblematic choice. Not only was the Nasserite type of secular nationalism at odds with Islamic revivalism, thus making the Arab–Islamic couplet an unstable, contradictory and, indeed, volatile mixture, but also other ingredients that went into the unstable national brew did nothing to tone down the potentially explosive nature of the recipe. The latter included elements borrowed from socialism and communism, including the powerful notion of the 'new man', as part of a modernist, progressive political agenda, in which links to the past were to be sundered in the transition to a fundamentally new historical phase. However, there was not just the problem of the incompatibility of some of the elements that went into the hybrid definition of Algerian nationalism. There was also the fact that this definition fell short of reflecting the specific realities of the Algerian nation.

National Consciousness and History

It was not only the official discourse of the dominant nationalist movement or the post-independence state that provided the input into the debates about the question of national identity. The dominant ideas were challenged by dissident forms of expression. A developing literature also proved a potent vehicle for articulating reflections and representations on this issue, developing characteristic images and metaphors that gave figurative substance to the idea of the nation. Amongst these, the national earth or soil, the sea, the age-old tree, the ancestors, ancient myths and legends, archetypal personifications, such as the Mother or the Woman, all have had an important part to play in bringing together a symbolic web representing the imagined consciousness of the nation and mapping some of its fault-lines.

A key work in this connection was Kateb Yacine's seminal novel about the Algerian nation, *Nedjma*, published in 1956. The author himself made the connection between the mysterious female character of the title and the Algerian nation, which had still to find, or rather construct, its 'elusive identity'. This had as much to do with re-evaluating the past, as projecting a vision of the new nation's future (Salhi 1999a, b). In this interpretation, Nedjma's own hybridity, resulting from the question mark hanging over her parentage and the circumstances of her

conception and birth, involving the rape of her mother and her putative four fathers of different ethnic origins, reflects the composite, hybrid character of the Algerian nation itself. Salhi claims that, in the end, all the characters reject Nedjma and this rejection should be seen as the rejection of the composite nation:

> This discourse demonstrates the characters' failure to recognise themselves in Nedjma, whom they reject when she represents a threat. However, rejection of her as a woman is also a rejection of her as an image of Algeria. This is what Kateb Yacine intended: the failure of the friends to recognise themselves in the Nedjma of four fathers is symbolic of the Algerians' failure to see themselves as inheritors of the Algeria of the Romans, Arabs, Turks and French. (Salhi 1999a: 54)

Kateb Yacine draws on many of the traditional myths and symbols, in conjuring up the complex web of Algerian representations of its past, to include real and mythic ancestors:

> History is at once lived and told by way of prose and parable. It is experienced and received as already symbolic, already mythic. Since the characters hold double roles as representative historical actors and as interpreters of that history, they create their history even as they are living it. Motifs from the tradition of the ancestors are continually adapted and reinterpreted to construct a contemporary account which is at once historical, political and parabolic. Imagery drawn from collective experience is used to evoke ideas of historical displacement and replacement. (Salhi 1999a: 54)

Thus, Algeria is portrayed as a land of tribes, in which a real national consciousness has not yet come to exist. At the same time, the emphasis is also on the process of giving birth to this nation. This enterprise was fraught with ambiguities and difficulties. On the one hand, history is always much more than 'myth'; historical reality is grounded in real economic, social and political processes, not to mention the personal experiences of individuals. Kateb Yacine was well aware of the ambiguities of returning to ancient tribal culture as a source of modern nationhood. However, as Salhi says, this return was seen as a necessary passage:

> The ancestors, in fact, are the only force that will unite the Algerians and overcome their disunity as separate squabbling tribes: 'Ce n'est pas revenir en arrière que d'honorer notre tribu, le seul lien qui nous reste pour nous réunir et nous retrouver' (*Nedjma*, p. 128). It is in the past that Algerians will find the key to their present, the key to future success and the survival of their country. (Salhi 1999a: 44)

As Si Mohktar says in the novel, Algeria was not yet a nation, but rather the remnants of decimated tribes (Kateb Yacine (1956)/1981: 128). There is no question of

glorification of ethnic purity, limited by the closely defined boundaries of the tribe. Rather, it is the hybridity, characteristic of the composition of the nation, which is highlighted. The nation may thus be symbolised by the tree (Kateb Yacine (1956)/1981: 102). However, this is not to suggest a linear evolution. Although it stresses that the nation's roots go back to the past, they are not restricted to the tribe, but in fact go back beyond this, to a mixture of different elements. Just as tree stock is strengthened and improved through hybridisation, so the national family tree has benefited from the influx and incursions of different ethnic groups, painful though the grafting process has been: 'The roots of the "nation's tree" go back far beyond the tribe's boundaries into the vast continent of Africa. In spite of their myth of blood purity, the Keblout are a microcosm of Algeria in which different ethnic elements, Berber, Arab and African, are mingled. The Algerian nation derives its vitality from this mixing of races and traditions' (Salhi 1999b: 44).

This is an argument that comes close to those put forward, as has been seen, by some on the Left, who see a beneficial side to colonialism, as a spur to improvements and progress. However, the real input into the process of understanding how the nation will be built is in the linking of the concepts of continuity (through the land, but also through the ancestors) and that of hybridity, with its emphasis on the diverse origins of the different components of the nation, not as discreet, separate elements, but through their fusion, via the grafting process, into a new hybrid entity. The repudiation of Nedjma is thus the rejection of a heterogeneous version of nationhood, based on the inclusion of the legacy of all those who had made their mark on the land, be they Berber, Roman, Arab, Turk, Jewish or French; it also symbolises the rejection of the female half of the nation.

The complexity of this synthetic approach has often been at odds with that of others with a more rigid, linear view of the nation's history. In many of these approaches, there are two key elements: the desire or need for a return to the precolonial past and, secondly, the notion of a watershed, or founding moment, which may be situated in the past, as, for example, the colonial conquest, or, more recently, in an event, such as the national revolution.

For those engaged in the national liberation struggles, there had been a clear-cut choice, broadly speaking: on the one hand, the legitimacy of the newly independent states could be founded on the basis of the restoration of a former, precolonial state; the other alternative was a radical break with the past and the founding of the postcolonial state on the basis of the fundamentally new, the act of liberation itself, the national revolution.

Both of these options were beset by problems. In the first case, as we have seen, the existence of a precolonial state could not be taken for granted, certainly not in a form that encompassed the whole territory and peoples that had come together to form the new nation. In some instances, French colonisers had supplanted previous rulers who had in their turn come from outside to assume control of the territory. Often, there had been no overall state to administer the territory as a whole, but a fragmented system of local fiefdoms and tribal power.

In the second case, the problems inherent in founding the state's legitimacy on the national revolution itself were compounded with the passing of time. The new

start, so full of promise, was inevitably destined to become part of history, and indeed particular interpretations of that history, in which the elements of the new were ossified into a worn-out rationalisation of the status quo and a blanket alibi for the actions of an increasingly ageing generation of independence leaders.

In the case of Algeria, these problems were compounded by the adoption of an approach to nationhood that attempted to combine the two options. On the one hand, the history of the new nation and of the nationalist movement was deemed to begin with the launch of the insurrection on 1 November 1954. As Benjamin Stora has put it:

> The 'Algerian Revolution' was conceived by those who provided its inspiration and leadership as the founding act of a new era. The initiators of 'November 1954' … declared that they had made a total break with the past. They had no intention, in the course of the war, of building up an overall, unifying picture of a movement based on its precursors. They institute the belief in the radical break separating the Algerian nation, 'regenerated' through revolutionary violence, from the former colonial society. In the process, they restart the history of Algerian nationalism from zero. (Stora 1992: 151)

At the same time, the Declaration, made by the FLN in November 1954, had as one of its stated aims the restoration of the Algerian State. While the leaders of the insurrection made a clean sweep of the past and initiated a new beginning, there was also recognition of the need to muster the forces of conservatism in the cause of national liberation. Yet the movement was also imbued with the ideology of revolution, in which the struggle marked the beginning of a new phase in Algerian history. As Hugh Roberts has pointed out,[1] there has been widespread borrowing from the terminology of the French Revolution to describe the Algerian historical processes, including references to the different stages of the Revolution, though without a general consensus as to which year or set of events these should relate to. The title of Fanon's *L'An V de la Révolution algérienne* bears further witness to this borrowing. Roberts has also suggested that the notion of 'stages' has been a common feature of Algerian political discourse concerning the Revolution, though this has been applied in different ways. On the one hand, there has been an important theoretical strand according to which Algeria was moving, in stages, towards modernisation. On the other hand, the Revolution has been theorised as a process of moving, again by stages, towards purification or 'authenticity'. It is clear that these two theoretical perspectives offer very different, indeed conflicting, approaches to history, even if these differences were fudged, mainly on the grounds of political expediency, in the Algerian context.

There was, however, one important idea that was common to both these strands, unlikely though this may have seemed. This was the concept of the 'new man', which was seized upon to articulate the aspirations born with the Algerian Revolution to found a new nation and a new society. It was through the notion of 'regeneration'

that the 'new man' could resonate to those inspired by secular modernism, such as Fanon, who considered that this regeneration would come about through the medium of revolutionary violence as a purifying force. It could also form part of the perspective of those looking for salvation via a return to the purifying force of a revitalised Islam. Although the notion of the 'new man' could thus appear to mean all things to all men, the values attached to the notion were profoundly different according to the political perspectives.

Fanon explicitly warned against the illusion of seeking salvation through an impossible return to a glorious African past, at the same time as he called for a rejection of European values as irrelevant to the struggles of the colonised (Fanon (1961)/1987). His own thinking, of course, for all its originality, was nonetheless based in part on the revolutionary tradition in European thought and can be seen as its continuation.

The notion of the 'new man' notoriously lends itself to a variety of political content and has made its appearance within the ideologies of fascism and Nazism to denote the emergence of a 'superior' type of human being, or Übermensch. In Algeria, it was subsumed into the notion of a homogenised, uniform national product of the Revolution, in which all differences would be merged in the interests of national unity, with a single national culture, a single party and a single state.

This notion of a homogeneous nation was flawed from the beginning. Nabile Farès has referred to the 'hiatus in the national consciousness' represented by the position of the Berber population and culture within the national body (Farès 1971: 32–33), though the cracks are manifold and were to become more marked once the common, colonial enemy could no longer play a unifying role, or not to the same extent in the post-independence scenario.

On the one hand, a façade of homogeneity was achieved by the denial of difference. It was claimed, for instance, that the Berbers had been totally assimilated with the Arabs for many centuries and that no cultural differences remained except those that had been exacerbated by a French policy of divide and rule. On the other hand, any remaining differences would be ironed out. This could take place as a necessary part of the liberation struggle. Already in 1958, Krim Belkacem had written in *El Moudjahid* of the Revolution as a 'melting-pot, in which men of all walks of life and conditions, peasants, artisans, workers, intellectuals, rich or poor are undergoing a process of intermixing, which will lead to the birth of a new type of man' (quoted in Stora 1992: 162). However, this notion of the hybridisation of Algerian society was soon replaced by a voluntaristic cultural policy with uniformity as its aim.

Moves to homogenise Algerian society and culture began in earnest under the regime of Houari Boumedienne after 1965, with Arabisation as a key instrument of the policy, justified as an exercise in breaking with French colonial culture. In effect, the attempts to establish a 'normalised', homogeneous national culture allowed no space for difference and even less for dissidence in the political arena. The notion of the 'new man' was yet again brought into service. In Boumedienne's definition, this was not so much the marker of a new stage of humanity, but a return to a more authentic version of Algerian man, a true son of the Algerian soil and the African

past, divested of all the ideological and cultural apparel left behind by French colonialism: 'not a man borrowed from elsewhere, but a real man, just as he has been fashioned by the history, geography, economy and blood of his forefathers. Refuting the untruths spread by colonialism and highlighting evidence of the African past and cultural presence' (quoted from *Symposium d'Alger* (1969) in Stora 1992: 231).

Cultural policy as formulated by the influential figure of Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, minister in various capacities in both the Boumedienne and the Chadli Benjedid periods, was seen in terms of a 'cultural revolution'. Writing in 1973 Taleb Ibrahimi made this explicit: 'The cultural revolution consists of working to create a new man in a new society, encouraging the adoption of a new way of life more in tune with the ideals of the Revolution and geared to consolidating and furthering the success of this revolution' (Taleb Ibrahimi (1973)/1981: 219).

This is far removed from the hybridity of the syncretic version of the nation favoured by Kateb Yacine, who saw the nation as the product of the many different men and women who have left their mark on the Algerian soil, in opposition to the single, uniform approach, on the one hand, and, on the other, the myth of the colonial pioneer, as trailblazing 'first man', set out by Camus, for instance, in his posthumous novel *Le Premier Homme* (Camus 1994: 256–58). In *Nedjma*, one of the characters, Mourad, explicitly rejects the illusion of the 'first man', speaking of 'the world which is no longer that of the first woman, or the first man' (Kateb Yacine (1956)/1981: 19–20).

Kateb Yacine quite characteristically stresses the role of women here. Indeed, there is a strong case to be made for the actual emergence of the 'new woman' through the part that many Algerian women played in the War of Liberation and the profound effect that their involvement was to have on their lives (Amrane 1991). The choice of the female character, Nedjma, to represent the nation is also significant in this respect. This does not seem to be of the same order as, for instance, the role played by Marianne in the French national iconography and imagination, as symbol of the Republic. Neither is Nedjma a mother figure, with a single lineage, symbolising the common origin of the nation and the care of its future citizens. On the contrary, she is a hybrid figure, of uncertain origins, with a multitude of different roles, as daughter, wife, lover, elusive symbol, providing a complex set of links between the nation's hybrid past and its national future.

This is also true of the equally fluid woman figure associated with the sea in Mohammed Dib's *Qui se souvient de la mer* (Dib (1962)/1990), though there is an ambiguity and interchangeability here between the mother, *'la mère'*, and its homonym of the title, *'la mer'*. The figure of the 'mother' is certainly very present in Algerian fiction of the nationalist period and carries a complex set of meanings, reflecting some of the key ambiguities and tensions of the colonial situation and anticolonial struggle. On the one hand, the 'Mother' conjured up family roots and loyalties, not least with regard to the 'mother tongue'. At the same time, colonial ideology portrayed France as the 'mother country', an ideal, spiritual home. Farida Abu Haidar has written about this dichotomy, as articulated by Dib in another of his novels, *La Grande Maison* (Dib (1952)/1996):

> Writers, moreover, were surrounded, throughout their childhood, by images of an absent spiritual mother (France), as well as a physically present one (their own mother). At school, it would have been instilled into them that France, *la mère patrie*, was their mother. This concept must have been a difficult one to grasp for some of them, as is shown by Dib in *La Grande Maison*, where the boy Omar cannot understand how his mother, Aïni, can be on the other side of the Mediterranean, when she is in fact at home. (Abu Haidar 1996: 72)

The importance of women's role in the transmission of memory is a constant theme of much of the fiction of this period, and particularly of the postcolonial period, where migration became a widespread phenomenon, bringing in its train new figures of the 'nomad', in which the lack of roots is experienced as displacement or loss rather than a celebration of 'rootlessness'. Malika Mokkedem, for instance, has referred to her grandmother's rejection of the idea of roots in favour of *'des jambes pour marcher et une mémoire'*.[2] Much of Leïla Sebbar's work relates to the important role of women in preserving and relaying the memory of the family and wider community. In the last volume of her *Shérazade* trilogy, for instance, there is an old woman in war-torn Beirut who is kept going by this duty of transmission, to pass on the heritage, the rites and rituals, the memory she derives from her female ancestors for the future generations of women:

> The mother repeats every day, every time all three of them are together, no one comes to visit any more, because the mother no longer invites people like before, she repeats, and the daughter and the maid servant wait for the prophecy: I shall die on my feet in my own house, I am my house and the children of my children will not leave it empty, I know this as my mother knew it, and the mother of my mother. I will not abandon my house to the jackals, they will not loot and pillage here, if my house collapses about me, my body buried in the ruins, covered in the silk and red carnations of the sofa, will not allow robbers to engage in shame and dishonour and they will flee, as if pursued by the fire of the divine judgement. The maid servant says that she will also be dead under the stones, and the daughter promises that, if she does not die, she will take care of the remains under the stones, the marble, the blue and green mosaics … Only then do they drink their tea, together, with solemnity. (Sebbar 1991: 119–20)

The telling of tales is a vital tool in this onward transmission of the folk memory, providing continuity with a communal past, whatever the degree of fictional creativity involved. Memory can thus be transmitted through oral or written records, involving the direct or indirect relaying of first- or second-hand source materials and the weaving of such material into stuff for the imagination, with a greater or lesser input of fictional elements. The old reliance on oral transmission, written material, monuments, images in sculpture and paint and other forms of art, has been augmented by new 'direct' records, first-hand photographic, cinematic and audio

material. Yet, as with the older forms, all this material requires interpretation and re-appropriation by later generations, which bring their own personal imaginary and symbolic codes to bear on it, as well as the collective ideological and cultural frameworks of interpretation of their group or society. Whether this is done consciously or subconsciously, the incorporation of the telling or retelling of history into a political agenda leads inevitably to their transference to a different plane.

Problems of Postcolonial History

These issues surrounding the question of history cannot be simply relegated to the past, but have a crucial impact on the political choices, regarding the nature of the future projects of the formerly colonised countries. Moreover, it is not simply a question of acknowledging that there are different interpretations of history and leaving it at that. This is not an option for two main reasons: first, because the way in which history is represented actually matters. It matters because representations of history are not just more or less believable stories or narratives of a nation's past, but are often used to found the legitimacy of particular political movements and institutions. Nation-states have used history in different ways to legitimise the form, content and operating mechanisms of their systems of power, as have groups and movements that seek to challenge this power and replace it. Thus, there are clear political implications attached to the different versions of history, whether these are acknowledged or not, and therefore, if history matters, so do the particular ways in which it is represented.

However, there is a second reason why accepting these differences along with the assumption that they are all equally valid is also imbued with political significance. It implies that objective knowledge of history is not possible, because historical reality is always an ideological construction for political or other purposes, according to the lights of the person narrating it and the language employed. According to this perspective in its extreme version, universally valid scientific knowledge of historical reality has become an impossibility. The political implications of this are immense. On the one hand, it denies the possibility of any understanding of the interconnectedness of the human species in its historical evolution. On the other hand, it opens the floodgates to any number of particularist versions of history, which can be pressed into the service of any cause or group of people, regardless of the implications and dangers they may present to others. As Eric Hobsbawm has recently argued, in a piece criticising postmodern trends in modern history:

> The major immediate political danger to historiography today is 'anti-universalism' or 'my truth is as valid as yours, whatever the evidence'. This appeals to various forms of identity group history, for which the central issue of history is not what happened, but how it concerns the members of a particular group. What is important to this kind of history is not rational explanation but 'meaning', not what happened but what members of a collective group defining itself against outsiders – religious, ethnic, national, by gender, or lifestyle – feel about it. (Hobsbawm 2005)

Of course, there are many objections to this argument and some of the others raised by Hobsbawm in this text. It is notoriously difficult to arrive at the objective or scientific 'truth' about history, given the extent of ideological interference, both conscious and subconscious, which takes place, and the complexities of meaning deriving from the language used in its writing. This does not necessarily mean throwing in the towel and abandoning the search for universally valid knowledge. However, it does entail the recognition of the difficulties that one many encounter in this search if it is going to be successful, and the development of strategies for overcoming them.

Moreover, as Hobsbawm himself recognises, not all of these 'identity group' histories are irrational, politically motivated distortions of history. Much of the work done has contributed to a much needed rectification of the understanding of historical reality as experienced by subordinate groups and peoples, including the working class, whose role has been consistently underplayed in histories written for the dominant. In the context of imperialism and colonialism, there has certainly been a place for the writing of history, as well as literature, that sets the record straight in terms of revalorising and reinterpreting the precolonial past in a way that may serve to destroy preconceptions relating to the backwardness of precolonial societies. Indeed, some of the great political leaders of the independence generation felt it important to turn their hand to this kind of historical writing, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, with his *Glimpses of World History* and *The Discovery of India* (Nehru (1934)/1989, (1945)/1989). It has also proved to be an important theme for writers of fiction to set the record straight, to re-appropriate the historical imagination or give voice to the forgotten and dispossessed. Assia Djebar is a prime example of this type of writing, not just in her efforts to give voice to the silenced women of previous generations, but also to reclaim the history of her country (Chikhi 1997), in novels such as *Les Alouettes naïves* (Djebar 1967), *L'Amour, la fantasia* (Djebar 1985), *Ombre sultane* (Djebar 1987), *Loin de Médine* (Djebar 1992), *Vaste est la prison* (Djebar 1995), or stories and essays, such as those in *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (Djebar 1980).[3]

Given the extent of the denigration and denial of the positive achievements of the colonised peoples prior to colonisation, it would be hardly surprising if attempts to correct the negative portrayal did not sometimes veer into hyperbole about past glories and a lost golden age as part of the necessary stage in the process of rebalancing. However, there have also been theoretically sophisticated attempts to redress the balance. Samir Amin, for instance, based his theory of the development of capitalism on the premise of the backwardness of Europe in relation to certain more developed non-European societies. His thesis was that capitalism could develop more easily in the less advanced societies of feudal Europe, which exemplified peripheral forms of what he calls the tributary mode of production, and where state formation and ideological expression were less developed and thus represented less of an obstacle to the growth of capitalism than in more central tributary societies. As he says, 'this greater flexibility of the less advanced societies seems to us to be central to the theory of unequal development'(Amin 1989: 9).

Amin does not limit his theory to the development of capitalism in peripheral Europe; he also applies it to explain the development of capitalism in Japan, seen as peripheral to China (Amin 1989: 64). However, his theory gives a dramatic new twist to the notion of progress, with Europe coming to the fore of historical economic development, not because of its strengths, but because of its weakness. Other explanations of the development of capitalism in Europe normally stress positive factors, such as the primitive accumulation of capital, cultural and ideological factors stemming from the Renaissance and Reformation, along with the arguments of a more suitable or superior natural predisposition for its development, relating to the environment, such as the climate, or the people, including racial characteristics of temperament, morality, energy, etc. As Amin himself stressed, if his theory has universal validity, it demolishes all Eurocentric notions of European uniqueness (Amin 1989: 64). It also gives a new interpretation to what has been known by some Marxists as the Asiatic mode of production, redefined by Amin as the central form of tributary society, with European medieval feudalism as the peripheral. Interestingly, Ibn Battutah attributed European backwardness in the fourteenth century to the inhospitable European climate (Amin 1989: 96).

The historical development of capitalism had enormous implications for the reconfiguration of European and global space, as discussed in the Introduction. For Amin, this is closely related to the modern definition of Europe, which he sees as a construct of relatively recent origin, implying a reconfiguration of history to found Europe on its supposed origins in an ancient Greece, redefined with hindsight as the polar, 'civilised' opposite to the 'barbarism' of Asia (see also Bernal 1987–91):

> The European culture that conquered the world fashioned itself in the course of a history that unfolded in two distinct time periods. Up until the Renaissance, Europe belonged to a regional tributary system that included Europeans and Arabs, Christians and Moslems. But the greater part of Europe at that time was located at the periphery of this regional system, whose centre was situated around the eastern end of the Mediterranean basin. This Mediterranean system prefigures to some extent the subsequent capitalist world system. From the Renaissance on, the capitalist world system shifts its centre towards the shores of the Atlantic, while the Mediterranean region becomes, in turn, the periphery. The new European culture reconstructs itself around a myth that creates an opposition between an alleged European geographical continuity and the world to the south of the Mediterranean, which forms the new centre/periphery boundary. The whole of Eurocentrism lies in this mythic construct. (Amin 1989: 10–11)[4]

It will be interesting to look at how this notion of centre and periphery has fared in subsequent developments in what is termed 'postcolonial' theory. Suffice it to say, for the moment, that, apart from some important exceptions, independence for the former colonies has not brought a fundamental reversal of the centre/periphery relation. However, in terms of perceptions of history, it was perhaps inevitable that

more nuanced pictures of the precolonial past would emerge, as it was that the use of the explanation of the devastation imposed by colonialism to explain all the problems of the formerly colonised countries would recede. Increasingly, the reclamation of their own history by the formerly colonised has entailed the calling into question of the very model that posits the watershed of colonisation and colonialism and its aftermath as the defining moment from which all else follows, as by Aijaz Ahmad here:

> In periodising our history in the triadic terms of precolonial, colonial and postcolonial, the conceptual apparatus of 'postcolonial criticism' privileges as primary the role of colonialism as the principle of structuration in that history, so that all that came before colonialism becomes its own prehistory and whatever comes after can only be lived as infinite aftermath. That may well be how it appears to those who look at that history from the outside – to those in other words, who look at the former colonies in Asia and Africa from inside the advanced capitalist countries – but not to those who live inside that history. (Ahmad 1996: 280–81)

This criticism relates equally to 'postcolonial' theory as to versions of colonial history and nationalist-inspired anticolonial reworkings of that history. It will become even more relevant in the process of current trends towards 'normalisation' (see Chapters 7 and 11).

Reclaiming Culture

The notion of reclamation has also figured importantly in the domain of culture. Potentially, this covers a very wide range of issues, fields and relations, though some critics have adopted a fairly restrictive definition of culture. Edward Said, for instance, differentiated culture from other types of practices, such as those connected to economic, social or political activity. For him, it was mainly associated with those forms of communication and creativity, designed to provide aesthetic pleasure. He also attributed an inherent value to culture, defined as the best or most noble elements of any particular society:

> As I use the word, 'culture' means two things in particular. First of all it means all those practices, like the arts of description, communication and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is pleasure … Second, and almost imperceptibly, culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Matthew Arnold put it in the 1860's. (Said 1993: xii–xiii)

A broader definition of culture sees it as the medium through which the individual relates, passively or actively, to his/her personal situation or social reality. In this

definition, culture is implicated in all spheres of human activity. It is constituted by practices, representations, myths, beliefs that fashion and frame the substance of our experience, whether or not they are conscious or unconscious, acknowledged or challenged. These individual elements generally constitute systems providing the connectivity between the different elements of experience and activity.

The scope of 'culture' can therefore extend into all spheres of life. It impinges on the assumptions, beliefs, values and practices operating in the economic, political, religious, judicial, artistic and intellectual domains, as well as in the customs and habits of social living and daily life, affecting cooking and food, dressing, shopping, leisure, family life and so on.

This does not mean, however, that culture has to be considered as a single monolithic system. First, since the elements that constitute it are constantly evolving and new elements are continually emerging, the stability of a cultural system is never permanent, but only relative. Thus, if sets of beliefs, values and practices can be grouped into more or less well-defined and relatively autonomous cultural systems, which can be represented as different, discrete cultures, these systems remain temporary configurations, fluid and dynamic in nature, in which the key mobilising element is human activity. Moreover, the boundaries between these different cultures are not impermeable. Interactions and interconnections between different cultural systems are commonplace, on both the synchronic and the diachronic levels. The specific, localised forms of the historical cultural heritage, constituted by the practices of previous generations, are prime candidates for this interactivity in terms of the new meanings with which they are invested, the new links that are drawn and the distance that is mapped from their assumptions.

One of the hotly debated topics of the national liberation era was the question of a national culture and its role in the nationalist project. Fanon was particularly concerned by this question, to which a whole chapter, 'On National Culture', is devoted in *Les Damnés de la terre* (Fanon (1961)/1987). While it was recognised that cultural struggles were an essential part of the nationalist struggle, there were two key issues. First, cultural struggles on their own were not sufficient. Sooner or later, the colonised intellectual or artist has to realise that 'one does not prove one's nationhood on the basis of culture but by demonstrating it in the struggle waged by the people against the occupation forces' (Fanon (1961)/1987: 163). The second issue concerned the content of this national culture. How was it to be defined? How was the right balance to be achieved between focusing on a new national culture, based on the values of modernity and progress, and looking towards a better future, on the one hand, and reclaiming a lost or threatened historical culture and tradition, suppressed by colonialism? Both projects had their own mobilising appeal and often coexisted in an uneasy tension in the cultural policies of the nationalist parties and post-independence states, where a factor of unity was provided by the fact that, in both cases, the national culture was defined primarily in opposition to that imposed by the former colonial power. The notion of a national culture, whatever its content, also tended to assume the form of a single homogeneous entity, which was used as the vehicle for the imposition of uniformity. This was particularly the case in Algeria,

where, ironically, the dominant model was to a large extent a mirror image of the dominant conception of French national identity, along with its intolerance of difference, which had been dominant in France at least since the Third Republic.

Of course, this supposed homogeneity did not exist in fact, either in France or in Algeria. As elsewhere, there was no single, unidimensional culture, just as there are no unidimensional individuals in the real world. Whether the ideology was used with a view to uniting the nation or to defining the Other (often part and parcel of the same process), there was a simplifying tendency at work, in which the real differences between individuals were steamrollered out of the fixed, stereotypical, collective categories, or the multiple facets of each individual's own self-identity were reduced into a single, pure essence.

In the face of the inadequacy of these notions of cultural identity, a number of alternative models have emerged, premised on a multiplicity of different cultures or cultural strands coexisting within a society or an individual, implying diverse identities. Some have described this more complex view of identity in terms of a palimpsest, where the different elements are superimposed one upon another, or where, as Kateb Yacine describes it in *Nedjma*, the palimpsest absorbs the earlier signs and meanings, 'comme un palimpseste boit les signes anciens' (Kateb Yacine (1956)/1981: 70). The palimpsest is a metaphor that has often been used to describe Assia Djebar's work, this time in its work of uncovering and rewriting the different layers of accretion, as Debra Kelly has pointed out (Majumdar 2002: 82). It is also a paradigm drawn upon by Salman Rushdie, most notably in his novel, *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

Here, Rushdie has one of his characters, Flora Zogoiby, drawing up physical and notional demarcation lines to mark out the boundaries of racial and religious communities, in a simplistic fencing in of the essential collective identity she shares as a member of Cochin's Jewish community (Rushdie 1995: 70–73). This identity is firmly fixed in the notion of a shared past, a collective historical memory. As such, it is challenged by her son Abraham, whose eyes are focused on the future, on the possibility of seizing his own potentialities and actualising them in a process of self-creation. At the same time, the collective essence is itself subject to change, through reinterpretations of the past and reconfigurations of the collective memory. What is more, the particular collective identity in question here is just one of a mosaic of diverse identities that formed the basis of the pluralistic vision of modern India, now under increasing threat from communalist, fundamentalist essentialisms.

The notion of the palimpsest, or the overpainting of one identity, replacing it with another, only to uncover the original at some point, may be applied equally to the reality of the individual, as well as to the reality of the city of Bombay or the national reality of India.

> The city itself, perhaps the whole country, was a palimpsest, Under World beneath Over World, black market beneath white; when the whole of life was like this, when an invisible reality moved phantomwise beneath a visible fiction, subverting all its meanings, how then could Abraham's career have

been any different? How could any of us have escaped that deadly layering? How, trapped as we were in the hundred per cent fakery of the real in the fancy-dress, weeping-Arab kitsch of the superficial, could we have penetrated to the full, sensual truth of the lost mother below? How could we have lived authentic lives? How could we have failed to be grotesque? (Rushdie 1995: 184–85)

This is a picture of reality with different levels, some visible, some invisible or hidden. In fact, what is being proposed gets away from binary oppositions altogether, including those of fact and fiction, appearance and essence, the individual and the collective. This is not the notion of a hybridised identity as a combination of several elements; the pluralism here lies as much in the diversity of layers, spaces and relations as in the processes themselves. What we have in Rushdie is a many-layered notion of identity, in which individual selfhood is inherited through the genes and/or manufactured either in a single or a multifaceted version by the individual her/himself or those who manipulate him/her. In addition, the individual's identity may be tacked on to some collective identity/identities, although it may override them. Thus, we have a vision of the world and the self which is full of different spaces, different layers, some open to others, some secret, some more real than others.

Other views of identity see it in more synchronic terms, where the elements making up a complex reality form part of an interconnecting fabric of interwoven strands and processes. Amitav Ghosh, like Glissant, though to less negative effect (see Chapter 7), has made particular use of the concept of weaving to articulate the global reality of human existence in its dimensions of both time (history) and space (the diaspora) in his novel *The Circle of Reason*, where he uses fictions based on the travels and migrations of different peoples across India, Africa, the Middle East and Europe to bring out the interweaving of different threads of human existence and history across continents. Far from an abstract, even threadbare universalism, this textured fabric is more like Césaire's vision of the richness of all the particulars.

What could it be but weaving? Man at the loom is the finest example of Mechanical man; a creature who makes his own world as no other can, with his mind. The machine is man's curse and his salvation, and no machine has created man as much as the loom. It has created not separate worlds but one, for it has never permitted the division of the world. The loom recognizes no continents and no countries. It has tied the world together with its own bloody ironies from the beginning of human time.

It has never permitted the division of reason.

Human beings have woven and traded in cloth from the time they built their first houses and cities. Indian cloth was found in the graves of the Pharaohs. Indian soil is strewn with cloth from China. The whole of the ancient world hummed with the cloth trade. The Silk Route from China, running through central Asia and Persia to the ports of the Mediterranean and from there to the markets of Africa and Europe, bound continents

together for more centuries than we can count. It spawned empires and epics, cities and romances. Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo were just journeymen following paths that had been made safe and tame over centuries by unknown, unsung traders, armed with nothing more than bundles of cloth. It was the hunger for Indian chintzes and calicos, brocades and muslins that led to the foundation of the first European settlements in India. All through these centuries cloth, in its richness and variety, bound the Mediterranean to Asia, India to Africa, the Arab world to Europe, in equal, bountiful trade. (Ghosh 1986: 55–56)

This is not just fictional fancy; it is closely related to the history of cotton and other textiles and their effect on the course of human history and the spread of global capitalism. Moreover, Ghosh gives the precolonial world its full due, breaking with the view that the modern history of the colonised countries began with imperialism and colonisation.[5]

Thus, where differences exist, they may well be in conflict, reflecting irreconcilable, antagonistic cleavages such as class divisions, or they may be non-oppositional, simply coexisting without interacting much at all. Any notion of a credible national culture is thus dependent on a concrete analysis of the elements and processes that actually make up that culture and the relations between them. In Algeria, problems inevitably arose when there was no recognition that differences existed, even if they were put aside to achieve a national unity or alliance, however temporary. The problem of a national culture in Algeria was, in fact, a reflection of the problematic nature of the national movement, which proclaimed itself a 'Front' but not in the usual sense of an alliance of heterogeneous constituents to achieve a common goal, but rather as a single homogeneous union (Harbi 1980).

Samir Amin attributes the very notion of a distinct and invariable culture to the mode of thinking characteristic of Eurocentrism, according to which there is only one 'Western' model for the rest of the world to follow. This does not necessarily imply a belief in the universal validity of this culture. On the contrary, Eurocentrism presupposes the existence of discrete, fixed cultures that mould the histories of different peoples, although it also proposes that these peoples should imitate the Western model. According to Amin, this is a phoney universalism:

Eurocentrism is a culturalist phenomenon in the sense that it assumes the existence of irreducibly distinct cultural invariants that shape the historical paths of different peoples. Eurocentrism is therefore anti-universalist, since it is not interested in seeking possible general laws of human evolution. But it does present itself as universalist, for it claims that imitation of the Western model by all peoples is the only solution to the challenges of our time. (Amin 1989: vii)

It is not a simple particularism, a particular ethnocentrism, like that of any other people; the key to its specificity lies in its pretensions to universalism and its capacity

to impose itself on other peoples. The corollary of this position would be that non-Western peoples are forever doomed to engage in mimicry, with the supine imitation of an alien, but dominant, cultural model the only alternative to the furtherance of an inevitable conflict of cultures, as set out in publications such as Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (Huntington 1996).

In recent years, the idea of such a clash of cultures (or indeed religions) has become more commonly used as a factor of explanation of conflict in the world, taking over from explanations founded in economic and political processes, deriving directly, or indirectly, from the class struggle, as seen by the international proletariat, or in terms of the Cold War clash of two socio-economic and political systems. The appeal in the West of this notion of clash of cultures as an explanation of the tensions and conflict existing in the modern world, may owe something to the need to construct a clearly defined Other to replace the bogeyman of the former Soviet Union. It can, however, be subject to criticism on a number of levels.

First, the conception of culture which it implies is that of a system, with a definite, fixed essence, closed to the influence of other cultures, as well as to the possibility of dynamic development as a result of internal processes. The reference back to origins or tradition takes pride of place in such a perspective, as a way of grounding this culture. This can be taken to the extreme position whereby the culture is considered to be organically linked to the nation. It becomes identified as part of its 'nature'. Cultural identity becomes a straitjacket and cultures assume the status of entities to be defended, rather than shared (Garapon 1997).

Secondly, it shares with other political positions that also highlight the role of culture, such as the call for the defence of cultural diversity so important in the discourse of *Francophonie*,[6] an undue prioritisation of culture or religion as the main issue in the world today and the most important arena of conflict and struggle. In such world views, whether sincerely or cynically held, explanations based on primary economic, social and political factors are displaced to the realm of the cultural or religious.

Thirdly, whether as the defence of the need for cultural diversity, in which different cultures are seen to complement and harmonise with each other, or in the form of the notion of a clash of civilisations, where cultures are presented as not merely different but in opposition to each other, culturalist analyses or proposals sidestep the issues raised by the globalisation of international capitalism and, in particular, the question of universalism.

Amin has categorised three distinct attitudes in respect of universalism, in terms of analysis and model solutions (Amin 1989: xi). In the first category, there are those who see no need for universalism but claim instead the 'right to be different' in what he describes as 'culturalist praise of provincialisms'. This implies a fundamental shift away from universal mobilising calls relating to the political rights of all humanity or the liberation of the universal working class through the world revolution to demands for the right to cultural difference. It is an approach that is in line with many contemporary forms of nationalism, regionalism, religious communalism, multiculturalist ideology and the *Francophone* discourse. The second category comprises those who believe that universalism already exists; it was discovered by

Europe and then adopted by the 'West' in general. It calls for all to 'imitate the West' as the 'best of all possible worlds'. This is a West that is summed up in the phrase 'marketplace plus democracy'. The last category consists of those who do not accept that this type of utopian universalism actually contributes to an understanding of the real nature of the global economy and political systems. In this last category of Amin's, we could include those who see the need to develop a better analysis of current global realities and problems, which could have a truly universal dimension and validity, along with appropriate global solutions, as well as those who reject outright the possibility of universal knowledge, given the existence of irreconcilable cultural differences, along with attempts to find global solutions through cooperation.

There are elements of all three approaches to be found in the political discourse of the dominant powers in the contemporary world, as in the discourse of those who would challenge this hegemony.

Notes

1. At a conference held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, on 24 July 1999.

2. This was at a conference on Francophone literature and Otherness, held on 11 and 12 March 1999 at the Waterford Institute of Technology (O'Dowd-Smyth 2001).

3. Vikram Chandra, for instance, in his monumental novel tracing the fortunes of Europeans and Indians alike through the various stages of the imperial past, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, also harks back to the time of Ashoka and a (literally) golden age of trade. 'Then there was a time of riches. A king named Ashoka did that rarest of things – he gave up aggressive conquest and ruled for the good of all creatures. Traders went to the empires of the West, taking goods and bringing back gold' (Chandra 1995: 254).

4. See also his sections on the developed Arab-Islamic version of medieval metaphysics and the peripheral Western version (Amin 1989: 40–59). 'European feudalism, the peripheral form of the tributary mode, gave rise to a peripheral version of tributary ideology; Islamic metaphysics, heir to Hellenism and Eastern Christianity, constituted the fully developed expression of the ideology' (Amin 1989: 58).

5. He continues with his metaphor of weaving, as the essential activity in human history:

    Who knows what new horrors lie in store? It is a gory history in parts; a story of greed and destruction. Every scrap of cloth is stained by a bloody past. But it is the only history we have and history is hope as well as despair. And so weaving, too, is hope; a living belief that having once made the world one and blessed it with its diversity, it must do so again.

    Weaving is hope because it has no country, no continent.

    Weaving is Reason, which makes the world go mad and makes it human. (Ghosh 1986: 57–58)

6. This is dealt with in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

The Battleground of Language and the Changing Discourse of *Francophonie*

The territories acquired during the various phases of France's imperial conquests are now largely lost to France, whether this happened in the past, as the consequence of inter-imperial rivalry, as in the case of its overseas territories in Canada and most of its footholds in India, or through the struggles of the colonised peoples themselves, as in the case of Saint-Domingue and much of the later empire. The military defeat of France in Indochina, following the battle of Dien Bien Phu, and its inability to achieve victory in the Algerian War marked two particularly bloody moments in the decolonisation process. Elsewhere in Africa, however, the final act of decolonisation was achieved relatively peacefully (Grimal 1978; Chafer 2002). Indeed, Fanon quotes the president of the newly independent Republic of Gabon, arriving for an official visit in Paris and proclaiming that 'Gabon is independent, but nothing has changed between Gabon and France, everything is the same as before' (Fanon (1961)/1987: 47).

In the first flush of anticolonialism and national liberation, much was made by those who were not so happy with the colonial status quo of the cultural imperialism that was an integral part of colonial rule. The imposition of an alien culture, including one of its most important elements, an alien language, was rightly denounced as part of the system of oppression. Fanon, for instance, wrote of the way in which the acquisition of mastery over the language of the coloniser both stemmed from and reinforced the feeling of inferiority that the colonised came to feel towards their own language and culture, as well as their eventual annihilation (Fanon (1952)/1975: 13–14). In the case of Creole, the inferiority of the language was internalised and many families seeking social advancement insisted on their children speaking French, a phenomenon illustrated in Damas's poem 'Hoquet' (Damas 1937).

However, the issues surrounding the question of language were more complex than its use as a simple tool of cultural oppression. In point of fact, the French colonial education system had not been designed as a simple, straightforward

linguistic and cultural indoctrination. Rather, it entailed the implementation of a twofold policy of social and cultural assimilation for a small minority of the colonised, through education in the French system and the French language, on the one hand, and the marginalisation of the vast majority, by dint of their religion and languages, on the other. As Memmi says in his *Portrait du colonisé*, most colonised children did not go to school and those who did found it, in most instances, an alienating experience (Memmi (1957)/1985: 124). This was particularly the case in terms of language, where the learning of French was a dual-edged weapon. On the one hand, bilingualism was a necessity for communication, culture and progress in a colonial context; on the other, it provoked a cultural catastrophe (Memmi (1957)/1985: 126). Memmi emphasises the specific character of bilingualism in a colonial context. It was not the same thing as bilingualism elsewhere, since the two cultural domains to which the languages gave access were in conflict. Their oppositional hierarchy was reflected in the languages themselves, in which the mother tongue was inevitably deemed inferior (Memmi (1957)/1985: 126).

Memmi's view of language was not a purely functional one, in which it was seen simply as a tool for communication. It entailed much more than that: 'Possessing two languages is not simply a question of possessing two sets of tools, it means belonging to two distinct psychic and cultural domains. And in this case, *the two realms symbolised and articulated through the two languages are in conflict*: they are those of the coloniser and of the colonised' (Memmi (1957)/1985: 126). In the colonial situation, the relations of colonialism impinged on the way the language issue was determined. This meant that bilingualism in this context could not be a diglossia, as in other societies, in which a popular idiom coexisted with a 'pure', 'high' or 'elite' language while remaining part of the same psycho-cultural universe. It also meant that bilingualism could not be seen as a key giving access to the benefits that polyglots enjoy when they have an additional instrument of communication at their disposal, but one that is relatively neutral, implying no emotional baggage. In fact, according to Memmi, what it was, in fact, was a real 'linguistic drama' (Memmi (1957)/1985: 127).

This is all quite applicable to the situation in the Maghreb countries under French colonialism, and Memmi's analysis has to be understood as referring primarily to the Maghreb, even though he frames it in the most general terms. Thus, when he says, for instance, that there is no literature in the colonised's own language (Memmi (1957)/1985: 127), this cannot be taken to be a universal characteristic of all colonised peoples.

However, it remains true that his discussion of the language question did, in fact, set the terms in which this question was to be discussed over the next few decades, though some might say interminably, particularly as far as the question of language choice in literature was concerned. The problem facing the (ex-)colonised writer was posed as one of linguistic and cultural ambiguity. On the one hand, Memmi accepted the need for a liberation and revitalisation of the colonised's own language, but he also recognised that those who opted to write in French might be unable to write in their native tongue or find no audience for such writing. He spoke of the

problems of alienation that might result from this choice, of the difficulties of addressing their work to a predominantly French audience. Whatever the case, it was a choice that was never unproblematic or neutral. Speaking of the French language, he asked whether it was merely a precise and effective instrument or a magnificent treasure chest, 'in which are hoarded the discoveries and contributions of writers and essayists, philosophers and scientists, heroes and adventurers, and where these treasures of the mind and spirit of the French people become transformed into a single mythic narrative' (Memmi (1957)/1985: 129). Fanon had also written about the dual aspects of language, although from a more critical perspective: technical mastery of the syntax and morphology, on the one hand, and the adoption of the culture associated with the language, the 'taking on of the weight of a whole civilisation' (Fanon (1952)/1975: 13–14).

However, there may, indeed, be other possibilities, and debates about language cannot be reduced to this simple choice. For instance, when the Queen of England makes a speech in French with a pronounced English accent, this may not necessarily be because of unavoidable limitations or poor linguistic ability, but perhaps to make it clear that she, and others of her background, have learned French in order to be able to communicate in certain situations, but not in order to identify closely with the French and assume their culture or to try to pass themselves off as French. More than a simple tool of communication, it may also be used in such a way as to become a marker of difference.

In Memmi's own case, he clearly chose the French language because he saw it as a treasure chest. In choosing to write in the French language, Memmi saw his choice as one that encompassed a wider cultural and emotional universe. He chose to become a French writer while at the same time recognising that this inevitably condemned him and other writers in his position to divorce and alienation, for colonised writers were bound, in his view, to call for their mother tongue to become the main language (Memmi (1957)/1985: 129). Thus, he predicted that literature written in European languages in the colonies would not survive long in conditions of independence (Memmi (1957)/1985: 130). Fanon had taken a different view, rejecting the view that black writers would turn against the French language, and, at least as far as the Caribbean was concerned, agreeing with Michel Leiris that Creole was doomed to disappear (Fanon (1952)/1975: 21).

In this, Memmi has been proved wrong. Literature, and particularly literature in French, developed as a key form of expression of the nationalist struggle, including the cultural struggle against imperialism. Moreover, in the Maghreb countries and elsewhere in the postcolonial world, not only has francophone literature survived independence, but it has continued to flourish and represents one of the strongest sectors of growth of literature written in French, in terms of both quantity and quality.

This development was integral to the process of regaining a voice after the stifling of expression under colonialism, described in metaphorical terms by Fanon as petrification. Memmi shared with Fanon the notion of the 'petrification' of the colonised. In his analysis in the *Portrait du colonisé*, not only does this petrification turn them into dehumanised objects, deprived of their own voice and capacity for

action, but it also forces them to live outside time. Without freedom of action, they cannot plan and build a future; moreover, their links to the past and their memory of the past become more and more tenuous with the absence or disarray of the institutions that normally preserve a community's collective memory. They are limited to the present, which, because of this divorce from past and future, is impoverished and lacking in real substance (Memmi (1957)/1985). In Sartrean terms, they become reified.

This process of petrification was graphically illustrated by Mohammed Dib in *Qui se souvient de la mer*, where the inhabitants of the colonised city are literally turned into statues of stone. As his narrator says: 'I took a step and a ton of stones fell upon my shoulders. Rage, humiliation. I have always despised this inert matter, which only needs you to be distracted for a second for it to take over your form' (Dib (1962)/1990: 26). Reification and petrification are linked to the silencing of the population. A rock-like silence descends. The inhabitants become incapable of speech. All they can do is spew out stones.[1] This is in stark contrast to the mounting wave of sound coming up from the underground and the sea, symbolising the growing nationalist movement that will eventually engulf the city. Yet the silencing of the colonised could also be turned back upon the coloniser, when silence becomes a tactic used to express revolt, in a relation where the master is the only one with the right of expression. For instance, sullen silence (*mutisme général*) is used as a tactic by the Algerian workers in *Nedjma* to defy those in positions of power over them as representatives of the colonists' camp (Kateb Yacine (1956)/1981: 14, 46, 50).

In the case of women, this silencing took on its own particular characteristics. Again, Assia Djebar has focused much of her work on giving a voice, or voices, to the many women who have formed part of this *'monde muet'*, the 'dumb world' of 'generations of women, women who have been masked, not allowed to be gazed upon or to gaze, treated as "things"' (Djebar 1997: 377). The women themselves 'are seeking a language', as a receptacle and cache for their own potential for revolt and for life (Djebar 1997: 377).[2]

With the regaining of their own voice, the question of the choice of language became a key issue of conflict and debate. For most writers, this was not a matter of deliberate choice. They wrote in the language that came naturally to them as a medium of literary expression as a result of their family upbringing or, more usually, their education. In most cases, it had become normal to articulate certain types of ideas and emotional relations through one language rather than another. When they faced up to the options available, they had recourse to a number of arguments to rationalise the language selected. Kateb Yacine famously referred to the French language as one of the 'spoils of war', although he also turned to the use of colloquial Arabic for his work in theatre. He was clear that his attachment to the French language did not bind him, as an Algerian intellectual, to France, but 'inspired an unquenchable thirst for liberty' (Salhi 1999a: 59). Nabile Farès has argued for writers to make use of all the linguistic instruments they have inherited (Chikhi 1996, 1997). Malek Haddad, on the other hand, abandoned the use of French after independence, seeing it as a 'language of exile' (Bekri 1986; Smail Salhi 1999). The

poet Tahar Bekri has made the point, following Barthes, that every language is in fact a foreign language for the creative writer, who has to create his/her own language (Anoll and Segarra 1999: 292).

For Assia Djebar, the language issue has been a source of ambiguity, in which the use of French may offer the potential for education and liberation, while at the same time acting as a factor of alienation from her maternal roots (Kelly 2004). This takes on a further dimension, given her project to give back their voice to women who have been silenced, when the issue of language choice becomes embroiled with the issues surrounding the possibilities and modalities of representation.

Anxiety regarding language issues is also a large source of inspiration for the literary and theoretical writings of Abdelkebir Khatibi, author of *La Mémoire tatouée* and *Amour bilingue*, amongst many other works (Khatibi 1971, 1983a, b). Khatibi uses the tools and techniques of deconstruction to subvert the hegemonic pretensions of the French language. He attempts to address the problem through the 'deterritorialisation' of the language and the promotion of an alternative way of thinking, in which signs and nuances interact and interpenetrate across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This new form of hybridisation or *métissage* is applied to the post-independence scenario of the Maghreb countries, in *Maghreb Pluriel* (Khatibi 1983b), though the significance of his work extends far beyond, to include more generally applicable themes of diasporic exile and alienation, without ultimately resolving the tensions involved (Gontard 1981; McNeece 1993; Hiddleston 2004).

The issues raised in connection with language in the sphere of literature represent, of course, only one aspect of this contentious question. The policies of the newly independent states with regard to language and cultural matters have also formed a key arena of struggle. The relationship to the French language is integral to all the debates on this question, which also brings into play the ongoing relationship of the former colonies to France itself, as well as to the organisations and cultural tendencies linked to the wider notion of *La Francophonie.*

If most of the former colonies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, have opted for a continuation of the dual system operating under colonialism, where French has remained the official language, coexisting with one or more local languages, there have been significant exceptions to this practice, particularly in the Maghreb, where a policy of Arabisation was instituted in all the countries concerned.

Creole, *Créolité* and Creolisation

There has also been some conflict arising from the subordinate status of Creole in the French Caribbean islands, although, as these have not attained independent status, this has taken a different form. The demand for Creole-speaking rights, voiced, for instance, by the Martiniquan député Camille Darsières in the National Assembly on 3 May 1984, has led to measures to safeguard the language and include it in the educational curriculum. In Haiti, Creole was made an official language on the coming to power of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1990. There had been significant work to develop a literature in Creole in Haiti, notably by the poet and playwright

Félix Morisseau-Leroy, who died in 1998 (*Guardian*, 11 September 1998). This endeavour was also taken up elsewhere in the Caribbean, most recently in Martinique by Raphaël Confiant, although he has now abandoned writing in Creole and reverted to French. On a more theoretical plane, the movement associated with Confiant, together with the Martiniquan linguist Jean Bernabé and the writer Patrick Chamoiseau, attempted to extend the defence of the Creole language into a whole new cultural aesthetic, most notably in their manifesto *Eloge de la créolité* (Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant 1989). This was a perspective that gave value to all the different strands that made up the complex mosaic of Caribbean identity, or, as the authors of the manifesto were to put it, 'our primitive soup', 'our original chaos', 'our mangrove of potentialities' (Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant 1989: 28). It highlighted the way in which Creole society had, from the beginning, formed itself into something new, transcending the binary oppositional divide of slaves and slave owners, and adapting to a new environment, in a cruel, but creative tension (Braithwaite 1978).

The role of the Creole language was crucial in this process in the Caribbean, where the silence imposed on the colonised elsewhere had taken an absolute form. When slaves were transported from Africa and uprooted from their own cultures and language communities, they were often literally deprived of their language and their voice. While communication with the slave owners was usually limited to receiving orders and there were other means to convey these one-way messages, it was also the case that the slaves were unable to communicate with other slaves who did not speak the same language; they could only suffer in silence or, at any rate, in the incomprehension of others. So the creation of Creole not only served a utilitarian purpose related to labour, but it was a real case of refinding a voice after being condemned to silence, what Confiant has called a *'mutisme forcé'* (Confiant 1996: 133). This lends a special character to the language, which already bears the marks of earlier struggles.

The Martiniquan Creole movement had the ambition to transcend the essentialising Negritude associated in the islands with Aimé Césaire (Burton and Reno 1995), though those involved acknowledge their debt to him, referring to Negritude as a 'baptism, the primal act of the restoration of our dignity', and claiming to be 'for ever, the sons of Aimé Césaire' (Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant 1989: 18). Nonetheless, they break with a simple, linear notion of identity, traceable to origins or roots in the African past, which they associate with Césaire, although, in fact, Césaire had also attempted to reinforce ties with the African present through his links with Senghor and others, as well as to develop links with the American black movements. Moreover, there were also elements in Césaire's thought that were very sympathetic to the notion of hybridity, such as his concept of the concrete universal (see Chapter 2).

The Creole movement was able to build on the notion of *'antillanité'*, or a more specific identity, which celebrated the 'West-Indianness', argued for by René Ménil in 1964 (Burton and Reno 1995) and, later, by Edouard Glissant (Glissant (1980)/1997, 1990). It is characterised by the acknowledgement of the specificity of

the Caribbean territories and a break, not just with Negritude but also with assimilation into France. For Glissant, it is first and foremost a case of situating these territories where they actually are, in the Caribbean, from a geographical, economic and cultural perspective. This means breaking with a notion of identity, characterised by what he terms a 'double alienation': on the one hand, that arising from being irreversibly 'cut off' from their origins in Africa (*'coupure béante'*); on the other, one that will involve the painful, but necessary, even if improbable, 'breaking off' the relationship with the dreamland of France (*'cassure douloureuse'*) (Glissant (1980)/1997: 26). It means taking stock of the Caribbean realities, to put an end to the illusion of a return to African roots, as well as the impossible utopia of full assimilation within the Hexagon.

Glissant's work developed a polemic against the universal, or 'the same', in other words, the domination of the 'West', imposing what he termed *'l'universel de la transparence'* (Glissant (1980)/1997: 14) in the name of *'le Divers'*, a complex, heterogeneous difference characteristic of the 'annihilated peoples' (*'peuples néantisés'*), unlike the single monolithic essence associated with Negritude, based on the notion of the 'authentic' or the 'pure'. *'Le Divers'* is a much more fluid notion than that of oppositional difference and one in which the processes of interaction and *métissage* have become paramount. Richard Burton defines it as 'a multiplicity of relations, a constellation of forces held in place by a complex process of attraction and repulsion. In contrast to Négritude's obsession with the 'pure', Antillanité makes of le métissage, understood both culturally and, presumably, racially, a supremely positive, indeed constitutive, principle' (Burton and Reno 1995: 147).

There is also a negative side, which Glissant himself has described through the metaphor of weaving. This is not to conjure up a many-textured fabric, as in the case of other writers (see Chapter 6), but to create, through a multitude of processes and intertwined forces, a 'web of nothingness', in which a people becomes trapped and unable to move forward, in spite of a preponderance of intellectuals and educated people.[3]

Créolité or *métissage*, in the more positive conception, is understood as a process, or rather any number of interrelating processes, in which a multiplicity of relations and forces are at work. Identity is understood in terms of 'relation', open, multidimensional, polyvalent. Again, as Burton describes it, this type of identity is like an 'archipelago or constellation of signifieds, none of which enjoys primacy over the others and whose unity lies not in the fact of possessing a single source but in the complex of gravitational forces that hold them in relation to each other' (Burton and Reno 1995: 148). It no longer takes single substances or essences as the building blocks of a new hybrid entity, but highlights the processes and the multiple relations in which the complex, heterogeneous forces at play in the diverse interrelate with each other, in a constant movement of renewal and transformation or 'unlimited *métissage*' as 'a combinatoire of diverse cultural materials that can never be halted, fixed or tied down, forever in the process of renewing and transforming itself' (Burton and Reno 1995: 148).

Adopting Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between the type of thinking and identity associated with the metaphor of the single root origin and that associated

with the metaphor of the rhizome and its multiple offshoots (Deleuze and Guattari 1980), Glissant not only broke with the problematic of 'roots', but also associated the new type of thinking with a specifically Caribbean organic metaphor, that of the mangrove swamp. The mangrove, with its dense, tangled forests and free-floating, intertwining and interlaced anarchic root systems, most aptly expressed the new conception of the potentialities of a myriad multi-connected identities and opportunities. Identity was no longer seen in binary oppositional terms, but through a multi-relational set of processes.

The authors of the manifesto took over much of Glissant's perspective on *créolité*. Rather than looking towards a lost past and attempting to reclaim it, the advocates of *créolité* see Caribbean society and culture in its fundamental newness. The different elements of its population in terms of racial and geographical origins, the different cultures and languages have made a heady mix of native American, European, African and Asian influences. However, these have not just been brought together to form a mixture. The process of synthesis, or hybridisation, has in fact resulted in the emergence of a society, a culture and a language that are qualitatively new and radically different from the sum total of all the separate parts that have gone into the brew. This phenomenon is seen in the racial hybridisation of the people themselves, as well as the symbols of their cultural universe, where a notable example is the merging of the Christian Virgin Mary into the pantheon of Hindu gods, brought to the islands by East Indian indentured labourers, where she is worshipped as a new deity, Mariémen, by both Hindus and non-Hindus. The Creole language itself is not just a combination of elements of syntax and lexis from its component languages. These have been transformed in the interaction to form a new language.

However, there was a tension between the view of *créolité* in which diversity, pluralism and hybridity were the key features and which extended beyond the boundaries of *Antillanité* to embrace all Creole societies, on the one hand, and the defence of the Creole language against the encroachment of French, on the other. The advocates of créolité were well aware of these dangers, including that of ossifying the language and culture into a fossil to be preserved, and attempted various strategies to mitigate the problem, including seeing the language as an 'ecosystem' (Burton and Reno 1995: 157–58).

The view of Creole in an antagonistic relation to French was particularly strong in Guadeloupe. Dany Bébel-Giseler's *Langue créole, force jugulée* (1976) emphasised the role of Creole as the language of resistance and the core of a repressed cultural identity linking Guadeloupeans to their African origins and was later to describe it as the 'umbilical cord binding us to Africa, to others, to ourselves' (quoted in Burton and Reno 1995: 151).

Those who emphasised the hybridity of the Creole language followed this logic through to recognise that the French contribution to the hybridised language was to be valued, just as the African one was. It was not French in itself that was to be rejected, but its position of hegemony, its claim to universality and the right to be the single language. Given that the islands remain part of France, the language issue has also to be seen in this context. In fact, the influence of the *créolité* movement has

been greater in terms of making the case for *métissage*, rather than through the use of the Creole language and culture as mobilising tools for fighting linguistic and cultural imperialism. As we shall see later in this chapter, there is much in this Creole perspective that which would not sound out of place in the modern discourse of *La Francophonie* or indeed in much postcolonial theory elaborated elsewhere.

The implications of this thinking are not confined to the intellectual sphere, but impinge directly on the definition of political outlooks and potential strategies, not least in the definition of the nation and national identity, where it posits a new type of nationhood, built not on homogeneous linguistic, cultural, religious or ethnic origins, but on a heterogeneous, hybrid identity, which acknowledges all the elements that have constituted the national body. This has been proposed for the very diverse populations of the Caribbean, but also forms a powerful strand of thinking in the Maghrebian context, most notably, as we have seen, in the work of the Algerian writer Kateb Yacine (see Chapter 6). There are also implications for the redefinition of relations with other nations, most notably, the metropolitan power, or the 'West' generally, and the implications for the choice of political strategies.

The Battleground of Language – Algeria

In Algeria, the language question became highly politicised as a result of the particular circumstances and influences through which it acquired its independence. The choice of Arabic as both the official and the national language has been fraught with problems, some of which relate to the diglossia existing between, on the one hand, the classical, written Arabic, which was the language of sacred and learned texts and thus restricted to a particular, educated milieu, and, on the other hand, the specific forms of colloquial Arabic in use in Algeria as an oral, spoken language. This particular diglossia was further complicated by the widespread use of different forms of other languages, such as Tamazight,[4] and, of course, French. Indeed, the number of French speakers in Algeria make it the second francophone nation after France. Moreover, as in many other countries that have experienced different cultural influences, the usage of these different languages and dialects cannot simply be allocated to specific regions, diverse groups of people or social classes. On the contrary, the different linguistic influences impinge on the actual language used to create various hybrid patterns of language use.

During the Algerian war of liberation, this hybridity had been reflected in the radio broadcasts by the Voice of Fighting Algeria from the end of 1956. Arabic, Tamazight and French were all used for these broadcasts and, as Fanon has pointed out, this was actually an important factor in consolidating and unifying the nation.

> the use of the Arab, Kabyle and French languages which, as colonialism was obliged to recognize, was the expression of a non-racial conception, had the advantage of developing and of strengthening the unity of the people, of making the fighting Djurdjura area real for the Algerian patriots of Batna or of Nemours. The fragments and splinters of acts … lost their anarchic

character and became organized into a national and Algerian political idea, assuming their place in an overall strategy of the reconquest of the people's sovereignty. The scattered acts fitted into a vast epic, and the Kabyles were no longer 'the men of the mountains', but the brothers who with Ouamrame and Krim made things difficult for the enemy troops. (Fanon (1959)/1970: 68)

Indeed, Fanon stressed that the French language itself had become transformed through the Algerian struggle:

The French language, a language of occupation, a vehicle of the oppressing power, seemed doomed for eternity to judge the Algerian in a pejorative way. Every French expression referring to the Algerian had a humiliating content. Every French speech heard was an order, a threat or an insult. The contact between the Algerian and the European is defined by these three spheres. The broadcasting in French of the programmes of Fighting Algeria was to liberate the enemy language from its historic meanings. The same message transmitted in three different languages unified the experience and gave it a universal dimension. The French language lost its accursed character, revealing itself to be capable also of transmitting, for the benefit of the nation, the messages of truth that the latter awaited. Paradoxical as it may appear, it is the Algerian Revolution, it is the struggle of the Algerian people, that is facilitating the spreading of the French language in the nation. (Fanon (1959)/1970: 73)

For Fanon, this was a way of 'exorcising' the language. He also saw it as a way of sowing confusion and disarray in the colonial camp, through appropriation of the enemy's linguistic system, particularly when French was used in the service of the nationalist cause, as at the Soummam Conference of 1956, instead of the Arabic used for earlier nationalist congresses.

After independence, however, the state adopted a voluntaristic policy to establish a national language to replace the language of the colonial power. As in France, the notion of a national language was considered essential for the unity of the nation. It was altogether normal for the choice to be Arabic, in spite of the difficulties of educating the nation's children in a standardised version of the language that had not been the 'natural' tongue of anyone. However, as Mohammed Miliani has said, in a balanced analysis of the language question in contemporary Algeria, it is not the introduction of a policy of Arabisation per se, that has caused the problems, but its implementation, in the face of a number of serious difficulties (Miliani 2005).

Not least of these difficulties was the extreme shortage of qualified teachers and the need to import these and their ideologies from other countries in the Arab world. The language thus came with an attached set of values, which were also imbued in the children. Also, the language taught as the national language of Algeria had, in fact, been divested of the specifically Algerian characteristics of Arabic as spoken in

the country. Even more fundamentally, the combination of factors impinging upon the development of the national language have run counter to the natural processes involved in language acquisition. According to Miliani, 'language policies have run counter to the existing linguistic processes (assimilation, learning cultures, cross-fertilisation), which are nonetheless natural, more complex and far from being completed'. These processes could be seen in terms of creolisation.

> Language, as a cultural manifestation (language is culture), has not escaped unscathed from all types of manipulation (political, social or educational). Very often decisions implying the management of languages or dialects have not taken into consideration the parameters rooted in the social reality of the country. Mainstreaming, as it is understood in this country, i.e. the ironing out of all idiosyncrasies characteristic of the Algerian society, has been on the political agenda for decades now. All decisions concerning the management of languages, rarely their development or their promotion, have involved the pruning of any element not concerned with the Arab–Islamic dimension of the country. What was ignored was the richness of the acquired heritage of centuries of contacts, tensions and commerce with other civilisations. The language situation of the country is therefore a tangled one, partly due to the number of dialects and languages in contact, but mostly because of the manipulation directed towards them. Besides, the diglossic dimension of the country (presence of a high and low variety of Arabic: the language of the Koran along with the Algerian dialect) has added to the complexity of the language situation, already problematic with the presence of French–Arabic bilingualism. (Miliani 2005: 133–34)

Far from the intended effect of uniting the nation, one of the consequences of the national language policy, the alienating effects associated with the stifling or devaluation of the 'natural' or 'mother tongue' under colonialism, has continued in a new form under the post-independence regimes, where the young 'seem to be torn between the "language of the mother" and the "language of the school"' (Miliani 2005: 134). In an interview with Jean Du Flot for *Jeune Afrique* in 1967, Kateb Yacine had referred to language as 'another umbilical cord joining us to our mother, that is, Algeria' (quoted in Salhi 1999a: 60). In effect, the language policy adopted by the state did not make full use of the potency of this natural link to reinforce national cohesion, but followed rather the French model of constituting national identity through the public education system, acting as the mediator of language acquisition. The opposition of the two conceptions of language as 'natural' or 'mother tongue' on the one hand, and an acquired, socially mediated, 'public' set of tools and identity system, on the other, mirrors the dual notions of nationalism of the maternal and paternal varieties, already discussed in Chapter 1.

Language policy has also extended to the teaching of foreign languages. The logic of the Arabisation policy had relegated French to the status of a foreign language. However, its status was to be further reduced when English supplanted

French as the required foreign language in April 1993 (Ager 1996), in a move that was questioned in the *Année Francophone Internationale* (1994) as a possible concession to Islamic fundamentalists. This interpretation is indicative of the extent to which the language question had become politicised.

As Memmi had pointed out, language is, on the one hand, a vehicle of communication and a tool for the transmission of a certain cultural heritage, as well as an element of that cultural heritage, a storehouse for the riches of particular cultures. However, its capacity to serve as a key factor of national unity cannot be taken for granted. While it is obvious that languages may have a part to play in creating solidarity between those who belong to the same language community, it is less likely that they will be able to achieve this in isolation from other linking factors, particular those that relate to common interests. When a language is under threat, it is an understandable reaction to emphasise its role as a repository of culture. In an article entitled 'Death Sentence', discussing the threat to many of the world's languages, David Crystal quotes Oliver Wendell Holmes to the effect that 'Every language is a temple … in which the soul of those who speak it is enshrined' (*Guardian*, 25 October 1999). However, this view of language as cultural essence, constitutive of identity, only expresses the passive aspect of language, which is crucially also an active, creative cultural practice. Indeed, language does not exist apart from communication and interaction with others. As Fanon claimed, 'speech is to exist absolutely for the other' (Fanon (1952)/1975: 13).

Language and Alienation

There are fundamental issues involved here relating to the nature of language. Language is clearly a 'given', a part of the contingent social and cultural reality into which one is born. There is such a thing as a 'natural' language, normally associated with the mother tongue. Nonetheless, it is only partly 'natural', as all language has to be acquired through a process of social interaction. This applies to the 'mother tongue' just as much as to other languages that can be learned, with a greater or lesser degree of choice. For instance, in certain circumstances, bilingualism, or even multilingualism, can be part of the 'given' social and cultural reality. The impact of the 'natural' language theory is thus tempered by the fact of (1) the social acquisition of language; (2) the ability to acquire other languages to a high and even the same degree of fluency; and (3) the contingency which governs the first language acquisition.

Jacques Derrida, himself the product of a complex linguistic background as a result of his birth in a Jewish family in Algeria, discussed some of these issues at length, notably in his book, *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre* (Derrida 1996). This was a highly personal book, dealing with the problematic issues of language in the Franco-Maghrebian context. The analysis of language as a form of alienation permeates Derrida's text, where he constantly returns to the aphorism, 'Je n'ai qu'une seule langue; ce n'est pas la mienne' ('I only have one language, it is not mine').

The text is thus situated in a critical relation to the position of Khatibi, whose alienation derives from the tensions provoked by his bilingualism. Derrida stresses

over and over again that, unlike Khatibi, he has only one language. Yet this monolingualism is equally the source of alienation for him, as this language is one that is not his. Though he has no other, French is not and cannot be his mother tongue (or natural language). This is because of his situation as a French Jew. More precisely, Derrida locates his alienation in a historical event, the withdrawal of French citizenship from French Jews in 1940, which entailed him being excluded from French schooling (Derrida 1996: 33–35).

Like Glissant, who has also written on the authority, if not authoritarianism, of the French language (Glissant (1980)/1997), Derrida emphasises the tyranny that the French language wielded over him. Language is seen in terms of the law; its rules and structures are there to be obeyed. However, in the colonial context, the tyrannical nature of the French language is reinforced and given an extra dimension through its association with the colonial power. It is integral to the colonial apparatus. It owes its prestige to this, as well as the fact that it is inescapable, although Derrida claims that the authority of language is at the root of all culture and that all cultures are constituted by the 'unilateral imposition of a language "policy"' (Derrida 1996: 68).

He experiences the language as an imposition. Forced to study in French, in a school system that did not permit him to learn Arabic or Berber (Derrida 1996: 65–66), he is taken over by the dictates of the language and has to conform to its law. Even if he were inclined to rebel, his questioning and challenging of the French language have to be articulated in the language itself (Derrida 1996: 14). When he 'surrenders' to the language, he internalises the law and engages in a form of self-policing. He endeavours to attain the ultimate degree of linguistic purity, to become 'more French than the French', while acknowledging the absurdity of what he is doing (Derrida 1996: 80–82).

Yet, as a Franco-Maghrebian, French could never be his mother tongue. It came from elsewhere, along with its rules and norms and laws (Derrida 1996: 72). The question of 'origins' appears to have a special importance in this perspective, which is not restricted to language. When he refers to Hélène Cixous ('this great French Jewish writer of Sephardic Algeria'), he defines her according to her parents' languages in what amounts to a kind of linguistic determinism – on the one hand, she has inherited the French language from her father, but, at the same time, she is also a German Ashkenazi Jewess 'through her "mother tongue"' (Derrida 1996: 113–14, note).

In this, his sympathies appear to lie with the views of the German Romantics, as expressed for instance in Herder's *The Origin of Language*, seeing language and culture as 'givens' (Herder (1772)/1986; see also Heidegger 2004). Perhaps surprisingly, this was also the view of Jean-Paul Sartre, who thought that language was 'imposed on each of us as a practico-inert' (Sartre 1969: 59), in much the same way as in the relationship between individuals and other ordered structures, such as institutions and ideologies.

> There is an institutional order which is necessarily – unless we are to believe in God the father or an organicist mythology – the product of masses of men constituting a social unity and which at the same time is radically distinct from all of them, becoming an implacable demand and an

ambiguous means of communication and non-communication between them. Aesop once said that language is both. The same is true of institutions. (Sartre 1969: 60; see also Sartre (1943)/1994: 412–13)

Yet Derrida also reacts against linguistic determinism and appears to agree with Emmanuel Lévinas, whom he quotes, that language, even when it is the mother tongue, cannot be seen as the 'generator or founder of meaning' (Derrida 1996: 111, note), along with its corollary that meanings can be translated from one language into another. This entails a critique of the essentialising tendency, which has led to the association of certain languages with a religious mission, a role in revealing the sacred, or with a particular world view or mindset, as displayed by those who link rationality or modernity as a fixed characteristic to the French language. The choice of language medium may be associated with a particular agenda when it is associated with a set of political interests. The politicisation of the language issue(s) has therefore to be viewed with caution, without discounting all the multiple factors that impinge upon language practice and policy.

However, language can never be all-embracing or all-determining. Desire, emotions, thought even, all can exist prior to language at a preverbal level and communication may take place without language coming into play at all, or, in a play of words, 'la langue qui goûte en silence, avant le mot' (Derrida 1996: 3). Moreover, through translation, language barriers may be transcended and the content of the communication, verbal as well as non-verbal, communicated, regardless of the particular language in which it is articulated. The transfer of meaning is possible across the language barrier; discursive boundaries are not absolute but can be crossed.

At the same time, the alienating potential of language(s) remains. For Derrida, it is almost as though he feels doomed to experience language as an absolute form of translation. In the absence of a mother tongue to act as a originating reference point, all language becomes translation. Yet he also admits that this is not unique to his particular type of monolingualism. All language, as all culture, is, potentially, the source of alienation, since it is always the language or the culture of the other.

The centrality of the language issue remains a characteristic feature of the way in which relations between the components of the former French Empire continue to be articulated. Nowhere is this more crucial than in the evolution of the Francophone movement. The domain of *La Francophonie* has also been one of the key sites for the development of ideas on the postcolonial relationship. The remainder of this chapter looks at the way in which the ideas associated with the *Francophone* movement have evolved over the course of the last forty years, in line with wider developments associated with the relations of France with its former colonies and their relations with each other.

The Origins of the *Francophone* Movement

The *Francophone* idea was launched in the immediate aftermath of decolonisation in Africa and Asia. It had its origins in an intellectual movement, and was, by and large, the brainchild of a group of intellectuals and political leaders of the newly

independent countries, such as Senghor, Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia, Hamami Diori of Niger. The term itself first found expression in the pages of the review *Esprit* in November 1962, in an issue, 'Le français dans le monde', which contained contributions by many of this new political elite, as well as artists and writers, including Kateb Yacine. Senghor set the tone, arguing for the creation of a community based on the common French language and culture. This notion of a *Francophone* community had already been defined by the geographer Onésime Reclus (1837–1916) in his book *France, Algérie et colonies* (1880), but it was only with its adoption by Senghor that it began to acquire its present significance.

At first sight, this might seem a response to decolonisation very much akin to the development of the British Commonwealth movement and institutions. However, it differed in significant respects. The Commonwealth came into being as a result of a clear strategy to maintain institutional ties between Britain and its former dominions, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, retaining the Queen as the head of the Commonwealth, and indeed head of state in the case of these dominions. It was primarily to provide a new constitutional framework for political and economic relations between Britain and these countries and Britain played a leading role within it from the outset, and continues to do so. It later evolved to include the colonies of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, which achieved independence in the post-war period – countries that became known as the 'New Commonwealth', a euphemism for 'black' to distinguish them from the 'white' dominions of the 'Old Commonwealth'. The fundamental remit of the Commonwealth remains defined by this structural relationship, although idealistic notions of community are not absent from it and have played a significant role at certain moments of its history.

Unlike the Commonwealth, the notion of a *Francophone* community was founded in the first instance on the basis of the common French language and culture, whereas, for the Commonwealth, cultural considerations, while not entirely lacking, have always been of secondary importance and have certainly never been articulated in terms of a single common culture or even language. This is not to say that there are no common cultural factors. Indeed, the English language plays a very important role and sport, particularly cricket, has been a privileged site for the celebration of commonly held values and a shared history. However, this communality is not the basis for the institutional apparatus of the Commonwealth, in which the role of Britain has been central to the enterprise from the beginning.

What was striking about the birth of the *Francophone* idea is that it came, by and large, from the colonised themselves, although critiques have been integral to its development from the early days (Kazadi 1991; Ager 1996). In the first years, France had very little part to play in the development of the notion, although it was articulated in terms of the universal humanism of French Enlightenment philosophy, which had, as we have seen, formed a major strand in the rationalisation of French colonial policy and practice.

One of the reasons for France's lack of involvement was almost certainly the failure of its earlier attempt to refound the empire on a basis that was more akin to

the British Commonwealth (Deniau 1983). In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the empire was renamed the Union française, and the relations between the colonies and the metropole redefined in the Constitution of the Fourth Republic, established in 1946. These measures, along with other reforms, were widely seen as mere tinkering and as too little, too late, and did little to stem the nationalist tide surging forward in the colonies. Like the later version of a French Community (Communauté française), offered to the colonies as an alternative to independence in de Gaulle's 1958 referendum, it was an attempt to keep the ideal of assimilation alive, to maintain the position that the future of the colonial peoples was as part of a wider French community. Although most accepted the proposal, with the notable exception of Sékou Touré's Guinea, which opted for full independence, it was not long before, one by one, the others followed suit and asked for independence. The Community, like the earlier Union, and indeed the empire itself, had been presented as alternatives to independence, as a means to stave off the end of the colonial link, unlike the British Commonwealth, to which the colonies gained accession after independence. It is hardly surprising that it would, under the circumstances, be some years before France would be able to take any significant role in the development of *Francophonie*.

It was the French language that provided the basis for the definition and ethos of the new *Francophonie*. Senghor's definition was 'an intellectual or spiritual community whose national, official or working language is French' (*Esprit* 1962). However, in less prosaic terms, the new *Francophone* community was also inspired by an idealistic vision of the brotherhood of man, which would replace the relations of domination between coloniser and colonised, though these were hardly alluded to. The discourse of the founding fathers was marked by a chorus of optimistic utterances, ranging from wishful thinking to spiritual mysticism. Senghor waxed eloquent about 'this integral humanism which is weaving its threads around the globe, this symbiosis of dormant sources of energy arising from all the continents, all the races, which are awakening to their shared warmth' (*Esprit* 1962).

In the case of Senghor, in particular, the notion was specifically cast in the mantle of universalism, counterbalancing his own earlier promotion of Negritude and laying himself open to the criticism that he had reduced the latter to mere exoticism. The key factor was the notion of the universalism of the French language.[5] This was not seen primarily as a practical matter, facilitating communication with the wider world, though this was certainly part of the attraction. More than this, French was not just seen as an 'international' language. It was imbued with particular characteristics, which gave it an almost venerated status. It was linked, by association, to the political ideals of Enlightenment philosophy, in terms of the universal Rights of Man to freedom, liberty and equality. Or, as Xavier Deniau expressed it: 'The French language transcends the framework of linguistic categories to become the mystical ferment of ideals that are specifically French and particularly that of freedom (Deniau 1983: 9).

For Bourguiba, speaking to the Assemblée nationale du Niger in December 1965:

for you, as for us, the French language constitutes a special addition to our cultural heritage, enriches our thinking, expresses our action, contributes to the forging of our intellectual destiny and to making us into fully fledged human beings, belonging to the community of free nations … the criteria are above all philosophical, based on the great ideals of the France of 1789, aspirations of Humanity going by the names of 'liberty, dialogue, mutual support'. (quoted in Deniau 1983: 17)

Similarly, for Edgar Faure, *Francophonie* could be nothing more or less than a *'libéro-phonie'* (quoted by Deniau 1983: 21–s22). Speaking in 1993, the Lebanese Minister of Culture and Higher Education was still making the link between these universal humanist values and the French language: 'If Lebanese maintain French as a second language, while English is the world economic language and has become practically universal, it is because *Francophonie* is a social choice: a choice for freedom, justice, fraternity and democracy' (quoted in Ager 1996: 27).

Yet the claims to the special status of the French language were not just based on its association with Enlightenment ideals. There has also been a long-standing school of thought that situates the superiority of the language in terms of its own supposed characteristics of clarity and rationality, based on the notion underlying Rivarol's well-known claim that 'if it is not clear, then it is not French'. From here it is but a short step to claim, as many have done, that it is the specific character of the language itself that has contributed, or indeed generated, the quality of French thought and culture. Georges Pompidou, for instance, claimed that 'it was because of the French language that France stood out in the world and was not a country like any other' (quoted by Deniau 1983: 21). De Gaulle also proclaimed the special status and universality of the French language: 'France has always ploughed with passion the furrow of intelligence and offered the entire earth a rich harvest; it is also true that she has given the world a language that is perfectly well-suited to express the universal character of thought' (quoted by Deniau 1983: 21).

The claim to the universality of the French language was, in fact, beset with difficulties. The most fundamental issue related to the contradictions between its status as a particular language, associated with a particular nation-state and territory, or rather territories (when one includes the wider French-speaking world), and the role wished upon it as a vehicle of universality. Moreover, any argument in favour of a universal role for the language had to contend with the fact that it had already been tainted, as a result of its close association with colonisation and the *mission civilisatrice*. Jaurès, for example, had advocated an important role for the Alliance française and had stressed that 'particularly for France, the language is the necessary instrument for colonisation' (quoted by Ager 1996: 12).

There were other problems associated with the original, idealistic, universalist discourse of the founding fathers of *Francophonie*. One key notion of Enlightenment modernism, history, was strikingly absent from the discourse. On the practical level, the reasons for this were understandable, given the roots of *Francophonie* in the history of colonialism and the often violent process of decolonisation. However, there was also

another dimension to the absence of history. *Francophonie* was not so much presented as a project to be achieved, 'a permanent cultural struggle' along the lines envisaged by André Malraux, but rather as an already existing community. This community was bound together not by a shared, if conflictual, past, but rather through common cultural and linguistic ties, which implied a wider common philosophy. As an ideal, it was already embodied in this rather grandiose version of paradise on earth.

It will be clear from this type of discourse that *Francophonie* was characterised, in the main, by an abstract universalism, on a different plane from the economic and political realities facing its members. This abstract nature was further compounded by the elimination of geography as a significant element in its formulation. Habib Bourguiba, for instance, defined *Francophonie* as an ideal community 'beyond politics or geography' (quoted by Deniau 1983: 17).

Furthermore, in the early stages, there was no attempt to use the *Francophone* movement to establish new types of political relations between France and its former colonies through the creation of a new institutional framework for managing those relations. Indeed, relations with the former colonies were conducted on a strictly bilateral basis.

This can be explained in part through the reluctance of France herself to become involved in the movement. This reluctance has been attributed to a desire to deflect charges of neocolonialism on its part, as well as the fact that the perceived failures, already mentioned, with the short-lived historical experience of the Communauté française had no doubt made the French wary of any further attempts to recast the empire into a new type of institutional configuration. However, explanations that are more convincing are to be found elsewhere. The bilateral aid and cooperation policies that France pursued allowed it to exert greater control over its relations with the African countries in particular, in the economic, political and indeed military domains, in accordance with its own perceived interests. Indeed, France's involvement in Africa following formal decolonisation did not show any evidence of disengagement, but a very active hands-on commitment. The interests of France and *Francophonie* were not to be confused. As Dennis Ager has said, 'Africa is still central to France, if not to *Francophonie* – and the distinction is worth making' (Ager 1996: 191).

In the absence of France, it was left to the Canadians to provide some of the impetus for a more concrete economic, scientific and technical cooperation within a multilateral framework, through the development of the ACCT, the Agence de coopération culturelle et technique, now known as the Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie (Mworoha 1995; Ager 1996; Majumdar 2002).

In spite of the formal absence of France in a leadership role, its presence was nonetheless assumed as integral to the notion of *Francophonie*. The linguistic and cultural ties that supposedly bound the francophone countries together were, after all, inextricably linked to France itself, as the source of that language and culture. While maintaining their distance from *Francophonie* as such, representatives of the French state and political class recognised and promoted the value of the French language, not just as a cultural vehicle, but also with wider policy advantages, marking a clear distance between France, together with those in the French-speaking orbit, and the superpower polarisation of the Cold War period.

The Evolution of *Francophonie*

It was not too long before it became evident to French policymakers that there might be some benefits to be gained from a more active participation in the development of *Francophonie*, although this did not necessarily mean replacing the focus on bilateralism. Counted as one of these benefits was the perception of *Francophonie* as a means through which France could exist on the world stage independently of Europe. Thus, the French began increasingly to take the initiative in respect of *Francophone* developments, culminating in the first *Francophone* Summit called at Versailles by François Mitterrand in 1986. Franco-African summits involving France and francophone African countries had taken place since 1973 and would continue at first annually and then biannually from 1988. In contrast, the Versailles Summit was the first summit to be organised under the aegis of the *Francophone* movement. It was followed by the Quebec Summit in 1987 and thereafter has been a regular biannual event, although the 2001 Beirut Summit was postponed until 2002, following the events of 11 September in New York.

There was also prestige to be gained and prestige has always formed an important element of French ideologies of power, as Edward Said pointed out (Said 1993: 204). Thus, if France could no longer vaunt the possession of a considerable empire overseas, it could now take up the discourse of *Francophonie* to proclaim, in what might be considered more acceptable terms, the presence of the French language and culture 'on all five continents'.

The value of *Francophonie* as a useful counterweight to American global power was more and more highlighted in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The battle lines were drawn up in the domain of culture, where the defence of the French language as a world language was promoted to counteract the threat of the spread and growth in importance of the English language (Crystal 1997), but also the global dominance of Americanised mass culture. Increasingly, the alarm was sounded to warn of the threat posed by the homogenising tendencies of the influence of American consumerism in terms of film, fashion, food and drink on the rest of the world. The French language and culture were not only portrayed as under attack and therefore to be defended; it was the same French language and culture that were also heralded as the weapon for the counter-attack against the culture of Disney, Coca Cola, Levis and McDonalds. Although the main cultural threat was that facing France itself, where the American influence had become deeply implanted by the end of the 1980s, *Francophonie* was seen to provide useful allies in this cultural struggle, which replaced to a large extent the more direct opposition to American political and military supremacy that had dominated Gaullist foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s.

However, the struggle itself was to show up the basic flaw in the universalist pretensions of the French language and culture, which were in danger of revealing their own particularity when the fight inevitably expressed itself in terms of the defence of the particular against the dangers of Anglo-Saxon global uniformity.

Although the struggle was conducted in terms of a defence of culture, the real battle lines were in fact being drawn up on the planes of the economy, finance and politics, where France was attempting to assert global influence against the US,

particularly in the spheres of African and Middle East policy, as well as in the conflict over matters of control in international bodies, such as the UN and NATO. For instance, the French engaged in unsuccessful efforts to block the selection of Kofi Annan as UN Secretary in December 1996, against the backing of the US and Britain. On the level of policy, differences and disputes related to Africa and the Middle East have erupted over many years and over a variety of specific issues. For instance, George Moose, as American Under-Secretary of State in charge of African affairs, attempted to play down the tension between the two powers in the course of a visit to Paris in January 1997, notably in relation to the situation in the Great Lakes region and Zaire (*Le Monde*, 17 January 1997). The culmination of these battles was to come when the differences over the crisis and impending invasion of Iraq erupted in spectacular fashion and overt political terms in 2003, with the French refusal to support the invasion of Iraq and the hysterical American reaction to the 'cheese-eating surrender monkeys', to quote a phrase first coined by the cartoon character, Bart Simpson, but widely taken up, along with the boycott of French produce. Until that point, the apparent play-off had been restricted, at least as far as the spectators were concerned, to the arena of language and culture, even though the most important underlying issues in the fight for global influence were situated elsewhere.

The Defence of Cultural Identity

Nonetheless, the cultural struggles were not devoid of significance. In choosing to make a stand on the question of culture, particularly in the field of the audio-visual media with the defence of the 'cultural exception' at the time of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) negotiations as part of the Uruguay round of 1993, a fight had been engaged, not least because the chances of winning it appeared to be realistic ones and a victory here had great symbolic value, going beyond the actual terms of trade (Godin and Chafer 2004). The recognition of the notion of the 'cultural exception' as a special case, for which the normal rules prohibiting state subsidy were not applicable, and which allowed the establishment of quotas favouring domestic production over imports, opened up a breach in the overarching regulatory system of the global market, creating a space for French specificity and influence to develop or, at the very least, to hold their ground.

This was the culmination of a period of struggle to maintain the singularity of French culture in the face of what was portrayed as the spread of 'Anglo-Saxon' hegemony across the globe. During this time, the French had come to realise the value of the francophone community as a vital resource in the defence of the French language and culture against the domination of English. In all respects, the 'French way' was promoted as the polar opposite of the 'Anglo-Saxon', which was a label used to suggest a 'non-existent, monolithic, imagined identity, represented as a united, dominating presence' (Ager 1996: 171). At times, this appeared to amount to a form of paranoia, with talk of an international plot against *Francophonie* (*Etat de la Francophonie dans le monde* 1994). Underlying the approach to the issues at stake was a dualistic perspective, in which there was a binary opposition between two cultural

protagonists. The French hoped to mobilise the resources of the worldwide francophone community in a straight contest between France as the defending champion of its universal language and, in the other corner, the rampant challenger, Anglo-Saxon hegemony, threatening to usurp its title.

However, this was always a phoney war. Not only was the supposed challenger unaware that the fight was on and so was oblivious, if not dismissive, of the so-called enemy champion. It was also the case that it was becoming increasingly clear to the French and francophone lobby that, in spite of their success in defending the *exception culturelle* at the time of the GATT negotiations, there was little likelihood that the fight would succeed in turning back the tide sweeping English to the fore as the major international language, not to mention the universal popularity of the icons of American popular culture. A new approach was needed, which involved changes in the discourse of the *Francophone* movement. Thus, during the 1990s, there was a series of subtle shifts.

First, the French language began to be portrayed, not just for its universality, but more specifically for its quality and appeal to the elites of the French-speaking world as the 'language of culture', by which was meant a highbrow, intellectual culture, far removed from the popular mass culture of the 'Anglo-Saxons'. This approach was notably summed up by François Mitterrand's famous dismissal of Eurodisney in 1992 as not his *'tasse de thé'*.

Secondly, the French language and culture, together with the Francophone movement began to be portrayed, not just for their own inherent qualities, chief of which had been the claim to universality, but also as the best means available for the defence of cultural diversity. Then, *Francophonie* was increasingly represented not just as the champion of the French language and culture alone, but as a major global site for the defence of cultural and linguistic diversity worldwide. No longer was it a case of French against English, or even French (high) culture against American dumbing-down. *Francophonie* now adopted a more pluralist line, in which the right of all languages and cultures to exist was promoted, in a celebration of multilingualism and cultural diversity, referred to by Stélio Farandjis as *'Francopolyphonie'* (Ager 1996: 58). This new turn had been heralded by the tone of the *Francophone* Summit held in Mauritius in 1993, which proclaimed as its slogan the need for 'Unity in Diversity'. Commenting on this development, an article in *Le Monde* was titled 'Pour le salut de la diversité' (*Le Monde*, 15 October 1993). Jacques Toubon, as Minister for Culture and *Francophonie* declared:

> the use of the French language which our peoples have in common provides us with the means to refuse the increasing uniformity of the planet which is being accomplished in accordance with the Anglo-Saxon model under the cover of economic liberalism … There can be no true liberty without a respect for cultural and linguistic identities, the kind of respect that exists within *La Francophonie*. (*Le Monde*, 15 October 1993)

There is no doubt that this shift was also partly in response to criticism from within *Francophonie*, that the emphasis on the French language obscured the real linguistic diversity that existed in its member countries. This point had already been taken on board at the 1989 *Francophone* Summit held at Dakar (Ager 1996). Not all were in agreement, however, with this watering down of the central importance of the French language. For some, their own linguistic identity was intimately connected to the wider issues surrounding the status of the French language in the world at large. These concerns in fact led a group of Quebec intellectuals to issue an appeal to France to do its utmost to maintain the position of French, to coincide with the Mauritius Summit (*Le Monde*, 15 October 1993).

However, following on from this, the language criterion for membership was considerably watered down, particularly as the scope of *Francophonie* was extended to bring in members from Eastern Europe, whose francophone credentials were fairly tenuous. The current *Charte de la Francophonie* does not spell out any language criterion for membership of the organisation.

Yet, while the new pluralism of the *Francophone* discourse has its undoubted attractions, as the steady increase in the number of its members confirms, there are, at the same time, serious flaws in the arguments put forward and problems with its credibility.

First, the depiction of Anglo-Saxon as a homogenised monolith of language and culture fails to take into account many of the complex and diverse realities operating within the English-speaking world and particularly within American society, which also impinge on the global influence of that culture. The globalising, homogenising effects of the economic phenomenon of the spread of the system of global capitalism have been displaced in this discourse into another realm, the realm of culture, submerging the very real diversity that actually operates in that culture and the ideologies and discourses of difference (for instance, in the areas of race, gender, sexuality) that articulate this diversity. Thus, while it is certainly true that the cultural influence of the USA, in terms of a dominant mass popular culture, has extended to the far reaches and hidden backwaters of the planet, along with its branded products and lifestyle, its Hollywood characters and imaginary universe, it is equally true that the forces subverting and challenging the dominance of this particular set of cultural forms and values are also available for export.

If globalisation is used as an all-embracing concept stressing the unity of the contemporary world on the economic but also on the cultural plane, it has, at the same time, been accompanied by the rapid and radical transformation of communications into a planetary system that is readily accessible and instantaneous. This communications revolution, while no doubt constituting a major driving force propelling the planet towards uniformity, is also a potent means for the subversion of the uniformisation process, presenting opportunities to bypass the control of monopolies up to a point.

It is clear that Francophonie does not have a monopoly on the defence of pluralism and diversity. Moreover, when this discourse is taken up by France, its force of conviction can be severely undermined by France's own record in this connection.

Far from encouraging diversity in its own society, France has clung to a political ideology that posits the indivisibility of the Republic and has ruthlessly suppressed any challenge to its national political, social and cultural identity.

As recently as 1992, there was a heated debate in France concerning the insertion of a language clause into the Constitution, as an amendment to Article 2, and the wording of this clause, when 'French is the language of the Republic' was to be replaced by 'The language of the Republic is French' (Wilcox 1994; Ager 1996). There has been a long history of French interventionism with regard to language policy, which is seen as a legitimate preoccupation of the state (see Chapter 1). Notable recent attempts to control and police the use of the language through legislation have included the *Loi Toubon* of 1994, making French the compulsory language of all aspects of public life in France (Ager 1996; see also Judge 1993). In addition, official bodies (such as the Académie française, the Haut Conseil de la langue française, the Délégation générale à la langue française, various ministerial departments) have been established by the state since the seventeenth century to carry out the centralised codification and policing of the norms and rules of the language and the control and defence of the linguistic purity of the nation's language usage, as well as the surveillance of linguistic borders and the repulsion of infiltration and incursions by 'foreign' languages.

The incorporation of minority and regional languages as part of the linguistic heritage of the nation has been staunchly resisted, notably through the public education system from the end of the nineteenth century. Schooling was a key element in promoting and enforcing linguistic uniformity across the nation. In June 1999, Jacques Chirac refused to allow the modification of the French Constitution that would have been necessary for France to ratify the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages, to which it is a signatory (*Le Monde*, 25 June 1999), and it is only belatedly and with singular reluctance that France has given any sign of extending the defence of 'cultural diversity' to France, at least as far as the 'regional' languages are concerned, with the *Assises Nationales des langues de France*, organised on 4 October 2003 (*Le Monde*, 3 October 2003). This is the same Jacques Chirac who made a speech in Hungary in 1997 in which he appealed for a worldwide mobilisation of what he called the 'militants of multiculturalism' to safeguard the diversity of the world's languages and cultures against their stifling by a 'single language' (see www.ambafrance-cm.org/html/france/langue.htm).

In October 2004, the parliamentary committee on the prevention of crime, chaired by UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire) *député*, Jacques-Alain Bénisti, published their interim report. One of the conclusions of the Bénisti report was that bilingualism was harmful to children from a non-French family background. It was alleged that it not only contributed to poor performance at school and prevented their integration, but was also a major cause of the development of criminality. The recommendation was that families should communicate only in French in the family home and this should be backed up by monitoring and visits from social workers and medical personnel (www.afrik.com, 28 February 2005).

Given this background, it is hardly surprising if a certain cynicism is the inevitable reaction of many to the fine rhetoric in support of cultural diversity and linguistic pluralism.

La *Francophonie* Today

In a further shift at the end of the 1990s, the impetus was given to provide *Francophonie* with a permanent political, institutional framework, which it had hitherto eschewed. In line with the decisions taken at the Hanoi *Francophone* Summit in 1997, an umbrella organisation, the OIF (Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie), was established, along with the post of Secretary-General, with the former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali as its first incumbent. Since then, Abdou Diouf of Senegal, has taken over as the second to fill this post. While retaining the emphasis on the cultural dimension to cooperation between its members, it now embraced a more political agenda, which also made economic development one of its stated goals. For instance, for the 2004 *Francophone* Summit held in Ougadougou, the theme was one of 'sustainable development'. In the current discourse associated with the complex of *Francophone* organisations, there remains a strong current of idealism, in which the goals of democracy, human rights and fraternity remain paramount themes (Judge 1999: 3).

Thus, while retaining a core membership drawn from the former colonies, the new *Francophonie* has become a more diverse club of nations, all of which are joined together by a desire to align themselves within the French sphere of influence, for historical or other reasons. For France itself, the value of the club is now proved. While certainly not the sole, or even the main, vehicle of French postcolonial and international policy, it represents a useful adjunct as another forum through which France may assert its influence on the world stage.

It remains an attractive option for both old and new members, offering countries, and indeed subregions, access to an alternative forum for lobbying and support, material help in the form of cooperation and exchange in the educational, cultural and technological sectors, aid with funding for specific projects and some protection against bullying by other powerful groupings or powers.

To a large extent, it has taken on the role of defender of the weak and powerless, in an endeavour, which seems at times to have the mission of providing alternative global leadership, somewhat to the Left of the United Nations, at least in terms of its rhetoric. The tone was set by the slogan adopted for the Cotonou *Francophone* Summit of 1995 and which appeared on the official French website for *Francophonie*: '*Francophonie* will be subversive and imaginative or it will not survive!' (www.france.diplomatie.fr/francophonie). The promotion of *Francophonie* as a radical, indeed subversive, alternative has been an essential part of its appeal. This appeal is still, as at the beginning, largely founded on ideas and values, even though the content has significantly changed. Thus, the importance of Francophonie as a counter-discourse at a global level needs to be recognised. The precise form and content of the discourse are liable to change. For instance, at the time of the Beirut

Summit of 2002, it was made clear that *Francophonie* was proposing dialogue and pluralism, in the face of the events of 11 September 2001, to avoid 'intolerance and isolationism', as well as the risk of falling prey to 'the aberrations of hegemony'.[6] Huntington's thesis of the *Clash of Civilizations* (Huntington 1996), which appeared to have found favour with the American administration, was particularly rejected by Jacques Chirac, who invited the participants to become the pioneers of the dialogue of cultures (*Le Monde*, 25 October 2002). The target of this discourse was clear, if not spelled out.

The *Francophone* discourse is, of course, more subtle and infinitely more attractive. Whilst the priority that it accords to culture downplays the real divides in an ideological level pegging that does not provide an adequate explanation of global reality, it nonetheless stresses cultural diversity as a factor in economic and political cooperation and development – working towards the resolution rather than the exacerbation of conflict. Moreover, it differentiates itself from Huntington's rather simplistic view of civilisations as closed and homogeneous, linked to a conception of identity as an absolute given, unchanging and non-negotiable, for which he has been much criticised. Thus, the *Francophone* model promotes a conception of culture that is open and hybrid, existing in a complex interrelation with the cultures of other societies.

Francophonie was also officially described as a 'postcolonial concept' on the summit website, further emphasising its radical potential.[7] Yet, it was somehow ironic that this happened only in 2003, when *Francophonie* had started out as an expression of a postcolonial perspective, in other words, the continuation of colonial relations in a new form. Moreover, it happened at a time, when the shift away from postcoloniality has intensified, with the extension of the organisation and movement to countries that have never been colonies of France, particularly those in Eastern Europe.

As has so often been the case, Algeria has been the exception amongst the former colonies, this time in its attitude to *La Francophonie*. Algeria refused to join because of fundamental ideological disagreements with its founding rationale, i.e. the primacy of the French language, as well as because of the political choice to keep its distance from the former colonial power and a body whose *raison d'être* has appeared to be based on the ties and relations established by colonialism. However, the very distinctiveness of the relation between Algeria and *Francophonie* can also provide insights into the way in which the body has evolved.

Algeria, which is the country with the second largest number of francophones after France, has been slowly moving towards a less hostile stance towards *La Francophonie*. The Algerian President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, attended the 2002 *Francophone* Summit in Beirut at the personal invitation of the Lebanese President, Emile Lahoud (*Liberté*, 23 January 2003). He also attended the 2004 Summit in Ougadougou, at the invitation of the Burkina Faso President, Blaise Compaoré, where he made a speech on 26 November in a closed session (www.sommet-francophonie.org/ouga2004), although the text of his talk, in which he linked the new agenda of the OIF to the development policies of Algeria, has been published at the website of the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (www.mae.dz). At the time of writing, it does, of course, remain to be seen whether Algeria will take the plunge and

become a member (*L'Expression*, 22 November 2004; *Quotidien d'Oran*, 27 November 2004; www.afrik.com, 26 November 2004; *El Watan*, 27 November 2004).

If it does, it will not be the only body to which it turns. Algeria is learning to play its cards skilfully, with a whole array of partnerships and alliances being developed to counterbalance the influence of any one of them. As in the case of France, membership of *La Francophonie* is rarely the sole option. Member countries mediate their access to the wider, international sphere through a number of bodies, including the United Nations and appropriate continent-wide or regional blocs, such as the European Union, the African Union, the Arab League and so on. These issues are further dealt with in Chapter 11.

Notes

1. La ville s'était noyée dans le basalte ou plus exactement que le basalte l'avait recouverte. Le résultat aussi fut que les mots renoncèrent à être des paroles et se changèrent en certaines choses qui ressemblaient à des galets avec lesquels nous allâmes cogner partout, essayant de sonder jusqu'où allait la profondeur des strates. Il se propagea ainsi une musique qui ne manquait pas d'une curieuse douceur mais qui se pouvait facilement confondre avec les pas de la taupe si l'on ne jouissait pas d'une ouïe exercée – et même les coups de boutoir de la mer qui régnait beaucoup plus bas. La voix devenant un sens inutile, certains d'entre nous, lorsqu'ils l'eurent constaté, tremblèrent de rage, serrèrent les mâchoires et connurent l'impuissance. Les murs ne cessaient d'improviser des nœuds inextricables pendant ce temps et, sur beaucoup, de s'enlacer sans souci de ce qu'il advenait de leurs captifs. La colère tourna, s'égara, revint sur ses pas dans ces boyaux et s'avéra inutile en fin de compte. Pourtant, et c'est le plus étonnant, nous ne voulûmes pas croire à tant de cruauté. J'étais du nombre, je le reconnais.

    Rentrant à la maison, durant ces journées occupées par d'interminables, d'imprévisibles marches dans le labyrinthe, j'étais aussitôt soumis aux questions de Nafissa et des autres femmes. Je gardais le silence ou grognais n'importe quoi; – les mots ne me sortaient plus. Forcément, mon gosier n'était plus apte à former des sons mais exclusivement des pierres. Elles me harcelaient toutes cependant, comme elles harcelaient les autres hommes, ne sachant pas à quoi elles s'exposaient: j'étais prêt à vomir un torrent de pierres. (Dib (1962)/1990: 18–19).

2. A propos de l'Algérie et dans son sillage, 'le monde muet' serait pour moi non seulement celui des choses (de la crevette, de l'orange, des figues …), mais aussi, depuis des générations, celui des femmes, masquées, empêchées d'être regardées et de regarder, traitées en 'choses'.

    Or, dans la tourmente et de la dérive actuelles, les femmes cherchent une langue: où déposer, cacher, faire nidifier leur puissance de rébellion et de vie dans ces alentours qui vacillent. (Djebar 1997: 377).

3. 'Il s'agissait de pister à force les processus multiples, les vecteurs enchevêtrés qui ont à la fin tissé pour un peuple, lequel disposait de tant de cadres et d'individus "formés", la toile de néant dans laquelle il s'englue aujourd'hui' (Glissant (1980)/1997: 14).

4. After much agitation over many years, the recognition of Tamazight as one of the languages of Algeria has been grudgingly agreed, but its actual implementation was still stalled in 2005 over the issue of whether there should be a national referendum on this or whether it could be decided by parliament, amongst other political reasons.

5. On the universality of the French language, see Fumaroli 1992.

6. Après les événements du 11 septembre 2001, ce dialogue est impérieux face aux risques d'intolérance et de renfermement. Afin d'éviter les dérives hégémoniques qui en résultent, la Francophonie se doit d'aménager un nouvel espace de concertation et de plaider en faveur d'une approche ouverte et plurale de la culture et des civilisations. Le dialogue est la seule possibilité de fonder une société internationale où les identités les plus diverses s'enrichissent au profit de chacun et de l'ensemble.

   Favoriser une cohérence harmonieuse des cultures dans le cadre d'une complémentarité partagée préviendrait l'écueil d'un modèle culturel dominant et exclusif tendant à ravaler les cultures dites périphériques au rang de réserves culturelles.

   (…)

   Vivre ensemble et différents, vivre ensemble nos différences, c'est le pari des pays francophones! (http://www.sommet2001.org).

7. C'est à Onésime Reclus, géographe français (1837–1916) que nous devons la première définition de la Francophonie, comme étant 'l'ensemble des personnes et de pays utilisant le français à des titres divers'.

   Mais, 'c'est après 1960 qu'elle s'est affirmée dans les faits comme dans les prises de conscience'. Ce dernier définit également la Francophonie comme un concept post-colonialiste qui n'a pris de l'essor qu'après l'indépendance des anciens pays colonisés. (http://www.sommet2001.org).

Chapter 8
The Loss of Empire: French Perspectives

Important though the development of *Francophonie* has been in the postcolonial francophone world, it does not give the whole picture of the development of postcolonial relations and attitudes, least of all from the point of view of French people themselves and the different sections of the postcolonial diaspora who have settled in metropolitan France. Neither the latter nor the populations of the Départements et territoires d'outre-mer (DOM-TOM) (essentially the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific island populations still under French rule) play a part in the world of *La Francophonie*, except as represented through the offices of France herself. It is, of course, well known that the French themselves do not on the whole fully identify themselves as part of the francophone world. There is a strong perception of a divide between France and the francophone world, continuing the us/them distinction between coloniser/colonised, albeit in more subtle form. This has been the cause of some considerable frustration to key figures in the *Francophone* movement, not least to Senghor himself, who urged the French to sign up more wholeheartedly to the universal ideal: 'Negritude, Arabism, it is also you, French people of the Hexagon!' (*Esprit* 1962).

This chapter will examine some of the other effects of the process of decolonisation on shifts in French perceptions and attitudes towards the former colonies, as well as the perspectives that developed to account for the ongoing presence of France in territories across the globe. A key aspect of these is the role played by memory and its translation into the public sphere through commemorative events of one kind or another. This chapter will therefore look at some of the effects of the historical processes of colonisation, decolonisation and the ongoing relations in the postcolonial world, to examine how they have impinged on the national collective memory.

Memory and Commemoration

Over recent years, there has been a tremendous interest in France in the question of memory, particularly in its relation to an understanding of the French national identity and cultural heritage. This could indicate a real renewal of interest in the past, as well as a loss of confidence in the forward-looking modernist project. It could also be the sign of a major readjustment, involving a reconfiguring of the perceived foundations of French national identity, and an attempt to come to terms with, or equally to sidestep, issues arising out of the colonial past.

The memorialisation of the past involves more than the objective study of history. On the one hand, it implies that the past matters in certain ways that derive from the meanings that are currently attached to it and that constitute its ideological significance for the present time. However, as Sartre put it, it also involves the transformation of the past, or certain features of it, into a 'historical monument', in order for a particular society to assume its role in history.[1] The memory of the collective becomes the subjective prism through which the objective history is viewed.

This is not primarily about the quality or reliability of any particular memory, such as that of individuals, who recreate an approximate version of their past, using a variety of techniques and stashed-away snippets, as described by the narrator in Paul Smaïl's (pseudonym) novel *Ali le magnifique*: 'Our memory wanders all over the place: we don't remember anything exactly, we're always adding new touches, stitching the whole picture together with snippets taken from other scenarios, with flashbacks and offcuts, fuzzy images retrieved from the dustbin of our memory' (Smaïl 2001: 149). There is more involved in the process of constituting the collective memory. This type of memory is a social one, in which the ideological consensus governing the world view and belief systems of the group concerned plays a large part in determining the form it takes (Debray 1992: 385).

The practice of commemorating events considered to have significance in terms of the nation's past is a vital part of this process and has long been a major aspect of French public life. In recent years, in addition to the annual commemorative events marking Bastille Day on 14 July[2] and Armistice Day on 11 November, there have been a number of major commemorations, beginning with the Millennial Anniversary of the founding of the Capetian dynasty in 1987, the Bicentenary of the Revolution in 1989, de Gaulle's Centenary in 1990, the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Normandy Landings in 1994, followed by those of other key events in the Liberation, the Liberation of Paris and then the VE celebrations. In 1996, the not entirely consensual commemoration of the 1,500th Anniversary of the Baptism of Clovis took place and, in 1998, the rather low-profile commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery (Vergès 1999). The year 2004 saw the commemoration and celebration of further events marking joint Franco–British endeavours: the Centenary of the Entente Cordiale, and the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Normandy Landings. It was also the year of the Bicentenary of the Code Civil and the founding of the First (Napoleonic) Empire.

The same year also saw more sombre events, marking the Tenth Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide with ceremonies in Kigali, from which the French

representative left rather abruptly after criticisms of France by the Rwandan President. It was also the occasion to mark the Fiftieth Anniversary of the defeat of Dien Bien Phu (7 May 1954) and, later in the year, the Fiftieth Anniversary of the event for which it was a major source of inspiration, the launching of the Algerian insurrection on 1 November 1954. It was also the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Secession of French Indian territories to India on 21 October 1954. In 2005, there are more occasions for celebration, including the Centenary of the victory of secularism in France and, in Britain, the Bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar.

The number of commemorations taking place obviously reflects a perceived need. Yet what precisely is their purpose and, more to the point, what are the features characteristic of a particular kind of discourse of commemoration?

When we engage in activities marking personal commemorations, such as significant birthdays or anniversaries, we are usually not just interested in finding an excuse for a good party, but also in marking important milestones in our lives, through which we affirm our own personal identity and consolidate our relationships with friends and family, thus rooting ourselves in a wider social context. When a nation-state decides to commemorate an event, a number of factors may be involved, ranging from the need to consolidate the national identity to the reinforcement of the legitimacy of the particular form of the state, the political system and its values. Often it is a question of making a statement about where the state wishes to position itself for the future, although the effect achieved may be very different from that intended.[3] It can be particularly relevant to diplomacy when the commemoration in question involves more than one country. In these cases, the nature of the commemoration, especially the form of the more or less official commemorative discourse, can be significantly revealing, not only of the current state of relations between the countries involved but also of the future direction they want this relationship to take. It is usually less revealing of the actual event commemorated and rarely leads to any further or deeper knowledge, but rather a reinterpretation, most often for ideological purposes. The relationship of such a discourse to a particular power configuration may be quite obvious and straightforward; on the other hand, it may also be highly complex and mediated.

In the case of France, the particular importance of commemorative events and activities, the role of monuments, particularly those to the dead and their relation to the national consciousness (Gaspard 1995: 21), as well as the notion of *patrimoine* and the spectacular growth in museums from the 1960s – forty-three military museums were created in the 1960s and 1970s (Stora 1992: 221) – has been well documented and analysed, most notably in Pierre Nora's *Lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1984–92).

Indeed, France is probably unique in having a body called the Délégation aux célébrations nationales, which is attached to the Archives de France and the Ministry of Culture, and was set up in 1978, not to organise commemorations itself, but to encourage, support and promote commemorative ventures organised by others (Gasnier 1994). It does this mainly through its annual catalogues and website, which list not only those events and individuals that are being commemorated in any

particular year, as well as the programme of activities associated with each of them, but also suggestions for anniversaries occurring in the following year that may be considered worth celebrating, notably the births and deaths of political figures, writers, artists, scientists, political events such as wars, battles and treaties, the publication of particularly significant works, important scientific discoveries, technical inventions and sporting feats. Moreover, they do not limit themselves to purely 'national' anniversaries but include figures and events from outside the borders of France, as well as a whole host of what might be considered purely regional manifestations.

Thus, in spite of a 'hands-off' approach to the actual business of organising these national celebrations, the Délégation aux célébrations nationales nonetheless provides a fairly good guide to what may be 'in' or 'out' in any particular year, not just by way of an examination of the lists provided, but also by a comparison of the list of suggestions of events suitable for commemoration in the following year, with the subsequent published programme of activities for that year. The content of the lists also provides some insight into the problematic areas of French memory and commemoration, particularly those linked to Vichy and collaboration, the deportation of the Jews and the Algerian War (Gasnier 1994). For instance, it is only since 2003 that a *Journée de la mémoire de l'holocauste et de la prévention des crimes contre l'humanité* has been added to the commemorative calendar, following an initiative by the European Education Ministers meeting in Krakow in October 2000, concretised in Strasbourg in October 2002. The date of 27 January, chosen for this event in France, as in other countries, has also been fairly controversial, being the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in 1945 and thus not directly linked to the persecutions undertaken on French soil by French nationals, although Jacques Chirac initiated the acknowledgement of the crimes of the French state under Vichy in 1995.

Where events are celebrated, it may well be with the intention of giving governments the opportunity to reinforce 'une certaine idée de la France' (Vergès 1999). Indeed, over the last few decades, in the face of a perceived crisis of national identity, this recourse to memory has become much more than a sign of a real renewal of interest in the past; indeed, rather more, it is an important tool in the 'mission' that some intellectuals have assumed to re-ground French identity on the basis of an account of its founding national myths and origins (Gaspard 1995). However, given the conflicting interpretations of the past characteristic of French history and the mutually exclusive founding myths of the nation on the Left and on the Right, the extent to which the construction of a national collective memory may be successfully achieved often depends on the degree of superficiality, even frivolity, required to keep at bay all factors of dissent and problematic issues that might disturb the consensus. As far as key political commemorations are concerned, this is, however, rarely the case. Sometimes, the disagreements and tensions arise at the very heart of the state itself, with conflicts between its different branches, as during the cohabitation period of 1986–88, when conflicts arose between the Elysée and Matignon in respect of the organisation of the Capetian Millennium celebrations in

1987 (Theis 1994), although as far as the content was concerned, harmony largely reigned in a celebration of the long history of the French nation, its links to the past, as well as the monarchy – no doubt assisted by the clouds of vagueness surrounding the actual historical events of 987 and their significance. This was to be in marked contrast to the polemics of the Bicentenary of the Revolution a few years later.

Attempts to construct a national collective memory may also be resented by individuals who have been touched by the events commemorated and who endeavour to retrieve and protect their own individual memories (Edwards 2000). There may well be conflicts between national and local interests, between the interpretations given to the event by different political and other interest groups, and even related to what is included or excluded from the commemoration. The approach to the memorialisation of the Vichy period in France is highly significant in this respect.

At the same time, the commemoration may well inspire efforts in the form of serious research to further objective historical knowledge of the event, thus bringing into play a scientific or academic discourse of a wholly different order. It may also provoke a challenge to the official discourse by way of the development of counter-discourses on a quite different plane.

The Bicentenary of the French Revolution was especially notable, not just for the conflictual approaches to the commemoration of the Revolution and the meaning to be assigned to it, but also for major challenges to the celebration itself, spanning the whole political spectrum, from monarchists and extreme right-wing opponents, via various types of liberal revisionists, to workers' strikes and movements in support of the *laissés-pour-compte* on the global plane.

The clash of discourses is not the only arena for conflict. Indeed, most commemorative activity takes on a decidedly theatrical character (Malaussena 2000), involving a number of different genres of cultural performance and distinctive public rituals, which can be a factor of mobilisation and political expression and an opportunity for articulating and confronting different positions.

The Non-commemoration of the Colonial Past

Particularly interesting, however, in the light of the multiplicity of recent commemorations, are the non-commemorations – those events that have to all intents and purposes been ignored, and the reasons for this. Of these, there is one that stands out. It is the almost total boycott of the celebrations of the Bicentenary of Haitian Independence on 1 January 2004, particularly by the former colonial power, France.

On the one hand, this is in line with the general reluctance to recall events connected to France's colonial past. The almost total silence until very recently on the events of 17 October 1961 in Paris is a prime example, in spite of the considerable amount of information that was published at the time (Einaudi 1991; House 2001),[4] as well as the more general amnesia relating to the Algerian War (Stora 1992). The tendency to obfuscate France's colonial past is also a feature of scholarly

discourse. For instance, the virtual silence that is maintained on the subject in Nora's *Lieux de mémoire*, which we have already mentioned, is highly symptomatic. Indeed, there is only one chapter in the seven volumes making up this vast work that has anything to do with the subject. This is Charles-Robert Ageron's contribution in the first volume on the Republic, dealing with the Colonial Exhibition of 1931, 'L'Exposition coloniale de 1931. Mythe républicain ou mythe imperial?' (Nora 1984, Vol. 1: 561–591).

To a great extent, then, the French obsession with memory is only one side of the coin; the other has been an equally powerful tendency to forget (Rollot 1992). Moreover, this has often been a deliberate policy to draw a veil over certain aspects of the nation's past and the misdeeds of some individuals, sometimes, but not always, on the grounds of the need for national reconciliation and unity. For instance, de Gaulle had been unwilling to set a date for a commemorative monument to the Algerian War, which the Fédération Nationale des Anciens Combattants en Algérie, Maroc et Tunisie (FNACA), the association of French veterans of that war, had asked for (Stora 1992). It has to be said that this tendency is not peculiar to France, but has been characteristic of other countries, including Algeria, that have political systems largely based on a real or imagined conception of the unity of the nation. This may sometimes involve a certain amount of rewriting of history to fit political needs (Stora 1992). Jean-Louis Rollot, amongst others, has questioned the validity of the argument that claims that some things are best forgotten in the name of national reconciliation, pointing out that this collective amnesia is invariably a one-way process for the benefit of people who have never expressed any regret or asked for forgiveness, people whom he describes as 'nostalgiques des causes funestes', who never give up sowing hatred and exclusion in their wake.[5]

In 1992, Jean-Pierre Rioux wrote that this was not a question of amnesia (Rioux 1992). The Algerian War had neither been unwittingly forgotten nor wilfully repressed from the nation's memory, though, of course, there was a deliberate policy of censorship of images, films, books and archival records that has had its part to play in determining the way in which memory has been transmitted.[6] For Rioux, on the contrary, the memory of the Algerian War was 'still a bleeding wound after thirty years'.[7] What was lacking, however, was a collective, national memory of the war, and Rioux maintained that it was still too early for this collective memory to be constituted. According to his analysis of the time, the official silence on the Algerian War, backed by the use of amnesty (Stora 1992: 281–83), was also because of the fact that this war was difficult, if not impossible, to fit into the historical narrative of the French nation as represented in the collective national memory.

For individuals, there may be something of a general phenomenon involved, related to the passage of time, as was witnessed in 2004 with the accounts of the D-Day veterans, some of whom had been unable or unwilling to relate what had happened in June 1944 because of their own personal traumas. In their case, as in similar cases, time may indeed play a role in finally allowing these hitherto unspoken memories to be expressed (*Le Monde*, 6 May 2004). One of the Algerians arrested and subjected to police ill-treatment at the demonstration of 17 October 1961 described

in an interview published in *Le Monde* (5 February 1999) why he has remained silent about the events and why he would never apply for French nationality.[8]

On the collective plane, however, other factors have an important role to play. Clearly the way in which wars and conflicts are dealt with in the national memory depends to a very large extent on whether the nation emerged as victor or as loser, and how the victory or loss is perceived, whether merited or unmerited. As with the American veterans of the Vietnam War, the soldiers who returned home from Algeria had to deal with serious ambivalence about their involvement in something that had turned out to be worthless in the general perception (Stora 1992: 220). However, as a proportion of the population, the French veterans of the Algerian War were far higher in number (over two million), came from all classes, regions and sections of society and were thus more representative of the nation at large (Stora 1992: 220, 293). The involvement of a sizeable number of *harkis*[9] was a further complicating factor (Stora 1992: 261–70).

Rioux points out that all the surveys of French public opinion since 1962 show that the French did not consider the Algerian War to be a major event of the century and certainly not on the scale of the two world wars. They also did not consider that it raised 'a real question of identity' for the *'communauté de métropole'*, i.e. all those who were neither *pieds noirs*, *harkis* or immigrants of Algerian origin (Rioux 1992). Alain Resnais's film, *Muriel*, was explicitly about the avoidance of the subject of Algeria (Stora 1992: 41). Or, to put it a different way, there has been no lack of individual memories of the war, as well as a plethora of oral and written sources, photographic, film and sound records; what was missing was any collective interpretation, a common ideological framework of reference, accepted by the nation as a whole, which allowed for the sanctioned expression of the individual experience. Just as for the events that occurred in Paris on 17 October 1961, a considerable amount of information about the Algerian War was published and well known at the time and since, including the use of torture.

The amnesia could therefore be described more accurately as obfuscation and silence concerning events that were not unknown. The opening of some of the archives, particularly some of the secret French military archives stored at Vincennes, and their cataloguing by the Service historique de l'armée de terre (SHAT) has made a contribution to revisiting the period of the Algerian War (*Le Monde*, 5 February 1999, 30 October 2001; SHAT/Jauffret 1990, 1998). General Jacques Massu's 'directive générale sur la guerre subversive', issued in March 1959, codifying the methods of interrogation of suspects, including the *'gégène'* (torture by electric shock), which he claimed, on several occasions, to be the best method for rapid gathering of information, was published in *Revue historique des armées*, 200, September 1995, without its appendix, which dealt with methods of coercion and which, according to experts, was not placed in the archives (see also *Le Monde*, 25 October 1995). Thus, in recent years, the so-called amnesia has finally begun to abate, notably through a flurry of official memorial activity.

This is clearly not just the inevitable result of the passage of time, but also the product of changes in the notion of French national identity. The activities have

included the erection in 2002 of a memorial on the Quai Branly in Paris to those who died for France in the Algerian War and other North African conflicts, the inauguration of 5 December as a national day of homage to those who died, as well as a separate day of homage to the *harkis* on 25 September. This followed the laying on 19 March 2002 by the Mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanoë, of the foundation stone of a memorial to Parisians who died in Algeria, Morocco or Tunisia in Père Lachaise Cemetery and the unveiling of a plaque in memory of the victims of the events of 17 October in Paris. On 20 April 2004, the Mayor renamed a square in the 12th *arrondissement* 'Place du 19 mars 1962', after the date of the ceasefire in Algeria following the signing of the Accords d'Evian (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 20 April 2004). Elsewhere, and even more controversially, commemorations in honour of the OAS (Organisation de l'armée secrète) and other supporters of *Algérie française* have gathered apace, most notably with the erection of memorials to 'those who were shot or gave their lives in battle for the cause of *Algérie française*', such as the monument erected in Perpignan and inaugurated on 5 July 2003 to coincide with the anniversary date of Algerian independence, or the stele inaugurated in Marignane on 6 July 2005 to coincide with the anniversary date of the execution in 1962 of Roger Degueldre, chief of the OAS death squad, known as Delta commandos (*Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 19 June 2005; *L'Humanité*, 6 July 2005).

In spite of this recent burst of commemorative activity (some officially sanctioned, some not, but none of it without considerable controversy), it is interesting that the Délégation aux célébrations nationales placed the Toussaint uprising of 1954 only on a list of secondary anniversaries for 2004 ('*Autres anniversaires signalés*'[10]) and then under the rubric *Terrorisme en Algérie*, while the short text referred only to '*opérations de maintien de l'ordre*', avoiding any reference to the Algerian War, as such, in a curious hangover from the long-standing period of denial that it was in fact a war and not simply an internal fight against terrorism or a peacekeeping operation (Stora 1992).

One might have thought that sufficient time has passed since the loss in 1804 of Saint-Domingue, France's premier colony of the time, for a cooler look to prevail and a dispassionate position to be taken in respect of the Bicentenary of Haitian Independence. This has, perhaps surprisingly, not proved to be the case.

However, the fact that Haitian Independence marked a major defeat for French colonial power cannot, by itself, explain this boycott. After all, the way in which Dien Bien Phu was remembered in 2004 shows how even a defeat can constitute a significant landmark in the national memory and a cause for celebration – in this case, mainly of the heroism of the combatants, much in the same way as the disaster of Dunkirk is celebrated in Britain. The fact that only 25 per cent of the 15,000 fighters on the French side were from metropolitan France, with the vast majority coming from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa may also have something to do with it, and certainly helps to explain the multiple meanings that were attached to the event, whether it was seen as the decisive end of French power in Asia or a beacon of hope for the liberation struggles elsewhere in the empire.

In contrast, the Bicentenary of Haitian Independence hardly featured in the commemorative calendar in France itself, though there were a number of events in

Martinique. Indeed, the only event listed by the Délégation aux célébrations nationales as taking place in mainland France was a lecture by the Haitian poet René Depestre, 'La France vue par un écrivain haïtien', scheduled to take place on 20 January at the Bibliothèque nationale. On the other hand, another event scheduled for 2004, the Bicentenary of the birth of Victor Schœlcher, French architect of the abolition of slavery of 1848 and elected representative of the people of Martinique in 1848 and then of Guadeloupe in 1849–50, gave rise to a large number of ceremonies, exhibitions, conferences and cultural events.

The Particular Significance of the Bicentenary of Haitian Independence

The Bicentennial of Haiti's Independence was organised against a background of unrest in Haiti in January 2004. The only major international guest to attend the ceremonies was the South African President, Thabo Mbeki. According to the reports at the time, Mbeki may very well have regretted his participation, disrupted as his visit was by violence and gunfire. France was represented by its ambassador and two *députés* (*Le Monde*, 3 January 2004).

In France, the event was largely ignored, in spite of its major significance to France and its own history, given the central role that the former French colony of Saint-Domingue had played in the slave trade and plantation economy, at one time supplying two-thirds of all Europe's tropical produce (Farmer 2004), its importance in the rise of the French mercantile bourgeoisie and plantation owners, the pioneering anticolonial liberation struggle that had taken place from 1791 under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture, and then, after his capture in 1802, that of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, leading to independence in 1804, and the impact of this struggle within the context of the French Revolution and the key political debates of the time, as well as its subsequent significance, as a beacon of liberation for other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and an enduring symbol, as the first ever black republic, founded on a successful slave rebellion.

What coverage there was in the French media at the time of the bicentenary was mainly to do with the supposed unpopularity and undemocratic regime of the Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his impending fall, as a result of an opposition movement largely made up of thugs from the former Duvalierist regimes of Papa Doc and Baby Doc and members of paramilitary organisations that had been formed after an earlier coup against President Aristide in 1991, most notably Louis Jodel Chamblain and Jean Pierre Baptiste, both of whom had in earlier years been found guilty for their role in a massacre in the slums of Gonaïves and, in Chamblain's case, for the murder of a prominent supporter of Aristide, Antoine Izméry, in 1993 (*Amnesty* 2004; Farmer 2004). A few weeks later, Aristide was toppled and sent into forced exile in Africa (*Amnesty* 2004), firstly to the Central African Republic and then, after a brief return to the Caribbean, though to Jamaica, not Haiti, ending up in South Africa, and thus outside the francophone orbit.

There has been an intense debate concerning the question of Aristide himself and the accusations of tyranny, arbitrary repression, violent rule and involvement in

drug-dealing that have been levied against him, on the one hand, and the claims to his sole democratic legitimacy and popular support, on the other. He was first elected in 1990, then restored to power in 1994 with American support, following the 1991 coup, to serve out his term, before standing aside for the election in 1996 of René Préval (the first Haitian President ever to see out his term of office), and coming back for re-election for a second term in a landslide victory in November 2000. There have been arguments on both sides of the divide (Dailey 2004; Farmer 2004), which cannot be explored further here. However, the fact that the year of the Bicentenary of Independence coincided with the toppling and subsequent ousting of Aristide from the country on 29 February by an alliance of American and French troops could be considered to be ironic in the extreme and a strong argument against France's involvement in this military endeavour. One might even have expected shock headlines in the press: 'France reoccupies Haiti in year of Bicentenary of Independence!' On the contrary, this type of connection was conspicuous mostly by its absence in the media. For their part, the French authorities showed little apparent concern about the possible effect that there might be on local, national or international public opinion.

This was, of course, in marked contrast to their position on the Iraq war – a fact that gave rise to a spate of comment at the time, in which the Franco-American alliance on Haiti and their willingness to cooperate as part of a UN peacekeeping force, the MIF (Multinational Intervention Force), which also included Canadian and Chilean troops, was portrayed as evidence of a great reconciliation, or even France's way of saying sorry after its opposition to the invasion of Iraq.

The reality is that France and America have been closely linked in the 'war on terror' for many, many years. When Pontecorvo's film of the *Battle of Algiers* (1966) was shown in the Pentagon just before the Iraqi invasion, this was not intended as a lesson in how not to conduct warfare of this type; rather, it was held up as a model of how to do it, from which lessons were to be learned.

There was nothing new in this. The American armed forces have long been turning to the French for guidance in conducting covert and overt military campaigns in Asia and Latin America. They have long used Roger Trinquier's *La Guerre moderne*, published in 1961 and translated into English as *Modern Warfare, a French View of Counterinsurgency* (1964), a result of experience during the wars in Indochina, as the standard textbook on tactics for waging war and campaigns of subversion against guerrilla forces. General Paul Aussaresses has also been an important contact and source of guidance, mainly because of his experience in the 'war on terror' in Algeria, especially during the Battle of Algiers (1955–57). Aussaresses has openly admitted to engaging in torture personally, justifying it by the need to extract information from prisoners under interrogation in 'real time' so that it could still be used effectively. He worked with the American military in the early 1960s, at the Infantry School at Fort Benning in Georgia, where his designation was French liaison officer. He was also adviser to the Counterinsurgency Department at the Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. It was this establishment that first began to use Trinquier's book, *Modern Warfare* (Andersen 2002). It is

claimed that this work was a key influence on the CIA-run Operation Phoenix, which was intended as a counter-insurgency programme and used dubious methods to achieve its aims.

One of the US officers engaged in this programme, retired army colonel Carl Bernard, has been quoted as saying that 'We imitated the French army's torturing and killing of captured revolutionaries in Algiers in Vietnam,' though he also says that it did not work, mainly because of the lack of real knowledge not just of the enemy but also of the supposed allies, and he recently warned of the dangers of falling into what he calls 'this attractive trap' of using the same torture techniques as the French in Algeria (Andersen 2002).

Similar tactics also appear to have been used in Operation Condor, a vast transnational counterterror and anti-subversion programme operated in Latin America with the covert support of the US (McSherry 2001; Vazquez 2003). Once again, the specific link has been made with French counter-insurgency concepts and techniques (McSherry 2001).

However, what was of even greater significance in the year of the Bicentenary of Haitian Independence is that this collaboration between the French and the Americans goes back at least to 1804. Like France, the United States refused to recognise the new Republic. The success of the Haitian anticolonial struggle was perceived as more of a threat to its own slave-holding interests than in the light of any supposed anticolonial solidarity. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the declaration of Haitian Independence, France pursued a policy of close alliance with the United States and cooperated through the institution of a trade embargo and other sanctions.

Just as importantly and with even longer-lasting effect, both were in complete accord on the question of reparations. This does not refer to reparations for the evils of slavery, such as were supposed to be paid eventually with the abolition of slavery in the USA. What was at stake here were rather the reparations demanded of the new regime in Haiti, reparations claimed by the French for the loss of lands and, indeed, slaves. These amounted to an indemnity payment of 150 million francs in gold (or £10 billion, at today's prices) (*Guardian*, 23 March 2004), as well as the reduction by half of Haiti's import and export taxes, as the price demanded by France in 1825, in return for renouncing attempts to reclaim the colony and recognising its independence – a sum that it took more than 100 years for Haiti to pay. It took the US somewhat longer to give recognition to Haiti, incidentally, in 1862 (*Guardian*, 23 February 2004). By the end of the nineteenth century, Haiti was spending 80 per cent of its national budget in loan and interest repayments (*Guardian*, 23 February 2004). Indeed, the repayments of this debt were still continuing until after the Second World War and their impact was totally devastating on the economic prospects of the country, which was transformed from the richest colony to the poorest country in the western hemisphere (Farmer 2004).[11] Although this is shocking in itself, what is perhaps even more surprising and disconcerting is the fact that, unlike other instances of reparations paid after conflicts (the reparations paid by Germany after the First World War, or the payments made to Jewish victims of

the Holocaust after the Second), these were payments to be paid not by the defeated but by those who had supposedly emerged as the victors.

The enormity of the scandal of these payments is perhaps put into its true perspective when compared with the financial compensation paid following the general abolition of slavery by the Second French Republic in 1848, following the large-scale revolts in the French Caribbean territories. Although, yet again, the former slaves themselves did not receive any compensation for their suffering and loss of liberty, this time it was the French state that paid the compensation, theoretically to the colonies, though actually to the former slave owners, thereby acknowledging its responsibility and complicity in slavery and the slave trade or, rather, the responsibility of its predecessors, for, with the new Republican dawn, France was deemed to have passed into the post-slavery age (Vergès 1999).

The issue of responsibility and culpability was raised once again with the debate following on from the introduction of a bill by the Guianese *députée* Christiane Taubira-Delannon in 1998 (*Proposition de loi* no. 1297) to have the slave trade and slavery recognised as crimes against humanity. During the debate in the National Assembly, following the first reading of the bill on 18 February 1999, the disjuncture between slavery and the Republic was highlighted in the majority discourse. This had been a tenet of Republican thinking since the abolition. As Gambetta had pointed out in 1881, the fundamental incompatibility between the Republic and slavery was indeed written into the decree abolishing it in 1848, though not quite in the terms he suggested ('The French Republic does not permit slavery on French soil' – Gambetta 1910: 166). In fact, the provisional government of 1848 had pointed to slavery being an affront to human dignity, contrary to the natural principle of law and a flagrant violation of the Republican dogma of liberty, equality and fraternity, as well as to the danger of serious disorder arising if abolition were delayed (*Décret de l'abolition de l'esclavage du 27 avril 1848*).

In the discussions of the 1999 bill, the view was reiterated that the Republic had nothing to do with slavery. Thus, slavery needed to be recognised for its heinous nature; it should be commemorated as such, in a symbolic gesture of moral and cultural reparation to the erstwhile slaves. The then Minister for Justice, Elisabeth Guigou, for instance, insisted on the need to fulfil a *'devoir de mémoire'*. However, slavery was firmly relegated to the pre-Republican past and any question of paying any material reparations dismissed as completely out of the question (Vergès 1999), even though this had formed a major component of the bill (Clause 5). Various reasons were advanced for dropping this clause, which did not figure in the final version, only adopted in 2001 as Loi No. 2001–434. On a pragmatic level, the difficulties of determining how much, to whom and how these might be paid were put forward as insurmountable. Yet there were also more sophisticated attempts to justify the rejection of the payment of reparations in principle. For instance, none other than Frantz Fanon was called upon, in particular by the Ministry of Culture, to justify the desire to move on and not allow the legacy of the past to impinge on the present day. In what might be seen as a further sign of an attempt to put the current perceptions of the French national identity on a new footing, in which the links with the colonial

past are sidestepped, the words of Fanon were quoted in justification of this position: 'Je ne suis pas l'esclave de l'esclavage qui déshumanisa mes pères – I am not the slave of slavery which dehumanised my ancestors' (Fanon (1952)/1975: 186).

It is true that, in *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Fanon dismisses the whole idea of demanding reparations for past enslavement, wishing neither to extract vengeance in the name of the slaves of previous centuries, nor to burden the European with guilt and, even less, to assuage any such guilt. As he says:

> I do not have the right, as a man of colour, to desire the crystallisation in the White man of a feeling of guilt for the past of my race …
>
> I have neither the right nor the desire to demand reparations for my ancestors sold into servitude.
>
> There is no Negro mission; there is no White Man's burden. (Fanon (1952)/1975: 185)

However, to use Fanon's text as a justification for the non-payment of reparations is, at best, a serious misunderstanding of his argument about the burden of the past or, at worst, a cynical abuse of the superficial ambiguity of what is basically a statement of his own existential right to freedom and refusal to be essentialised into an identity based on the myths of Negritude.

Yet, if Fanon was impatient with those who harked back to a glorious past, in part in compensation for their miserable present, he was not arguing for a denial of history. On the contrary, he was a vociferous proponent of the need to enter history and prepare for the future, in full recognition of the fact that this opportunity had been denied to the enslaved and the colonised, who had not been in a position to be agents of their own destiny. Thus, when Fanon asserts his intention to turn his back on the past, he assumes that he will be part of a community that will have won the freedom to take their future forward.

Indeed, he makes this explicit in his last book, *Les Damnés de la terre*, written shortly before his death in 1961. He writes here that: 'Independence has certainly given the colonised moral reparation and restored their dignity' (Fanon (1961)/1987: 57). However, he was also fully conscious at this time that this moral reparation would not be enough and that independence would mean an economic regression, which could and should be countered by a form of compensation from the colonial powers, whose wealth had been built on empire.

> This European opulence is literally scandalous, for it has been built on the backs of slaves, it has fed on the blood of slaves, it comes directly from the soil and the subsoil of the underdeveloped world. The material well-being and progress of Europe have been built with the sweat and the corpses of the Negroes, the Arabs, the Indians and the Yellow races. From now on, this is something that we are determined never to forget. (Fanon (1961)/1987: 68)

It is equally clear that Fanon was not expecting this compensation, call it reparations, aid or some other term, to come from governments but from the people of Europe.

For Aristide and his supporters, the question of reparations was not one that has been confined to history. Whatever the form it takes, symbolic, moral or more concretely political or financial, it has certainly been raised as a fundamental part of the process of 'repairing' the wounded psyche by those critics relying on psychoanalytical theories, such as Françoise Vergès (Vergès 1999), who also recognise that there are indeed some wounds that are irreparable.

Whatever the truth about the nature of Aristide the man or of his regime, it has to be recognised that it was one of the key issues raised by him. He actually quantified the amount due to the people of Haiti, allowing for interest and inflation, as $21 billion, more precisely, $21,685,135,571 and 48 cents to date.[12] Moreover, the financial penalties imposed on Haiti were to continue in a new form, following the withholding of payments agreed as loans and the blocking of aid in recent years, or its diversion into financing the presence of American troops on its soil, leading to Haiti sinking even further into debt (Farmer 2004). Following Aristide's re-election in 2000, the US froze international aid, citing the disputes over eight parliamentary seats where the results were contested by the opposition. Loans from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) for health, education, drinking water and road improvement were particularly affected. Only $4 million of the $146 million agreed in these loans had reached Haiti by 2004 (Farmer 2004). The indebtedness of Haiti to international financial institutions and foreign governments has been estimated at $1.134 billion, an increase from $302 million in 1980, as much as 40 per cent of this debt having been incurred as a result of loans made to the Duvalier dictators and their military successors (Farmer 2004).

There is no doubt that Aristide's claim for repayment of the sums calculated as Haiti's due – in a sense, reparations for the reparations – was made with absolute seriousness and determination. The figure 21 (from the 21 billion due) had become a potent political symbol in Haiti, with Aristide drawing up a 21–point development programme, one point for each billion owed (Farmer 2004; *Le Monde*, 3 January 2004). Moreover, in the face of demands for repayment, France and the USA were wedded in the same determination to avoid payment (in whatever form it might take), for any such payments would lift the lid off a cauldron of demands from all over the formerly colonised world, not to mention the descendants of slaves in the USA itself. Indeed, these demands have already been making themselves heard, not just in terms of political rhetoric, but also in the legal domain. The government of Vanuatu has raised the issue of compensation from both British and French governments for nineteenth-century 'slave voyages' that took islanders to Australia or Fiji to work in the sugar plantations (*Guardian*, 13 April 2004). Descendants of slaves, using DNA to support their ancestry, instigated a legal action against Lloyds of London and America tobacco giant RJ Reynolds for the recovery of $1 billion for their part in the underwriting of the slave vessels and profiteering from genocide (*Guardian*, 30 March 2004). Legal actions were also prepared in February 2004 against the New South Wales government for misappropriation of wages owed to Aborigines (*Guardian*, 13 April 2004).[13]

Aristide's claims therefore posed no mere rhetorical threat. As we have seen, the demand for reparations has already been raised and rejected in the French legislative

assemblies and, clearly, there will be resistance to any further demands for repayment by France. This will also be the case for the USA, which itself instituted a military occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934, which brought back black corvée labour and created a Haitian army that only ever went to war against its own citizens until it was disbanded by Aristide in 1995 (Farmer 2004). However, France continues as in the past to adopt a more sophisticated and subtle position, marked by various progressive-sounding discourses (*Francophonie*, diversity, pluralism, human rights, etc.). Although the military option is always there in reserve for when it is needed, there should be no underestimating the importance of discourse and ideology as a vehicle for maintaining France's position in the world at large, and especially as far as its relations with its former colonies and client states are concerned. Jacques Chirac, like his predecessor, François Mitterrand, is keen to promote himself as champion of the wretched of the earth, in Africa especially and, indeed, anywhere else but France itself. To this end, he set up a committee in November 2003, the Landau Commission, chaired by Jean-Claude Landau, Inspecteur général des finances, and including a cross-section of civil servants, business people and activists such as Jacques Cossart from Attac (Association pour une taxation des transactions financières pour l'aide aux citoyens), to look into the possibility of international taxation, amongst other options, to address the problem of global poverty (*Le Monde*, 14 May 2004; *Libération*, 21 September 2004). Proposals included a variety of taxes on cross-border activities, such as air and sea transport through a tax on aviation or shipping fuel, or on capital flows across national boundaries (*Guardian*, 28 January 2005). However, this was a much watered-down version of the so-called 'Tobin tax', devised in the 1970s by the Nobel prize-winning economist, James Tobin, which was also designed to act as a disincentive on the movement of capital and currency for purely speculative purposes. The taxes proposed by Chirac, as initially designed, were to be set at a minimal level – a rate of between 0.001 and 0.005 per cent of international financial transactions was suggested, enough to raise revenue for the fight against poverty and disease, but not sufficient to have any transforming effect on speculative practice. The terms of reference did not include the question of reparations for actions committed by France in the past. In the event, France has struggled to get its proposals accepted by other countries as an international measure, with only the UK and Chile initially signing up to the air travel taxation proposal and, at the time of writing, it remains to be seen how it will eventually be applied (*Le Monde*, 4 November 2005).

These proposals to finance poverty eradication and development, mainly in the countries of Africa, like the demands for the cancellation of debt, such as those made by the movement Jubilee 2000, may actually obscure the issues at stake, for all their real practical merit. For, in point of fact, the debt is the other way round. It is the former colonial and slave-trading and owning powers that owe an enormous debt to those they colonised and enslaved. There is thus a strong case for arguing that this is the debt that should now be repaid, either in the form of reparations or in the form of a global taxation that would affect individuals, companies, corporations and financial institutions, as well as national governments. Both of these constitute

political demands, not an appeal to the generosity or moral conscience of the well-off. As such, there are enormous difficulties preventing their achievement, given the present global configuration of political power. There is no doubt that, in the interests of justice, the latter option would be preferable, since it would take account of the continuing process of exploitation and the long-term effects of capital accumulation in the 'North'. At the same time, it would be even more difficult to achieve politically.

In the course of 2005, Chirac's proposals, along with the high-profile efforts of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown to extract a commitment from their European partners to meet the target figure of 0.7 per cent of national income for development aid by 2015, inevitably raised anew questions about the relations of Europe with Africa. Not least amongst these questions was the impact of the colonial past on present-day issues and relations, and how this colonial past is dealt with in terms of commemoration, as well as through the teaching of history in schools and universities. For both Britain and France, the two most important former European colonial powers, these questions again came to the fore, with a renewed significance, sparking off a number of new, if muted, debates.

Britain's low-key celebrations of VE Day, along with Tony Blair's absence from the commemoration event in Moscow, were not the only instances of political controversy in response to the sixtieth anniversary of 8 May 1945. In the relations between France and Algeria, this date figured as a crucial reminder of another set of events, which took place in the eastern Algerian town of Setif and a number of other towns that day.

In 1945, after the turmoil of war, Algeria remained a French colony, with a large population of European settlers, totally nearly one million people, some of whose families had lived in Algeria for several generations. They were nonetheless a minority, outnumbered nine to one by the majority Muslim population. It was this minority that had stifled even the most modest attempts at reform to give a limited number of Algerians some political rights. This was in spite of the growth of a nationalist movement, consisting of a number of different strands, ranging from reformists' demands for equality as an integral part of France, via the reforming Islamists' demands for recognition of their own religious and cultural specificity, to a fully-fledged independence movement, seeking to blend nationalism with a socialist agenda.

The nationalists had seen all their demands rebuffed. Many had fought alongside the French in the First World War, and more recently, along with the Free French in the Second. Even after the ousting of the Vichy administration from Algeria following the Allied landings of 1942, they were told to be patient, that politics would have to wait for the end of the war. Yet, when the reform proposals finally came through from de Gaulle's provisional government in 1944, they were essentially nothing more than a rehash of the proposals put forward by the Popular Front government of Léon Blum in 1936 and his Minister of State for Algerian Affairs, Maurice Viollette, and thus known as the Blum–Viollette proposals. In effect, the proposed reforms would have meant extending French citizenship and

thus political rights to a small group of those considered to be 'meritorious Algerians', in other words, those who had served France in a military or administrative capacity, and those who had acquired a certain level of French education. At most, it amounted to about 60,000 people. Yet the Algerians had seen the collapse of what had hitherto been perceived as a mighty military and political power with the fall of France in 1940 and then the warring between the Vichy and the Free French factions. They knew that France was not invincible.

Thus, with nationalist organisation proceeding apace in the towns and countryside, the demonstrations called to celebrate the victory of the Allies in Europe, and particularly the liberation of France, were seen, if not as a provocation, then as an ideal opportunity to counter with demonstrations for the liberation of Algerians.

It was in Setif that things came to a head most dramatically, with Algerian demonstrators defying the order not to show the national flag, and the outbreak of a bloody confrontation, in which demonstrators and French armed forces personnel were killed, before the violence spilled over to a generalised bloodbath, leading in its turn to a brutal and systematic repression, with arrests, bombardments and summary executions. Estimates of numbers killed have varied, with Algerian nationalists claiming 45,000 dead.

The flashpoint of Setif meant that it was thereafter destined to enter history as one of the key founding myths of the national revolution, kept alive in the national memory as the point of no return from which the armed struggle launched in 1954 was inevitable. The massacres of Setif were stamped upon the memory of the new post-war generation, which would come to age through the experience of the Algerian War. The football team of the town of Guelma have traditionally worn a black strip in memory of those massacred on 8 May 1945 and in its aftermath, and continue to do so. Against the significance of the events of 8 May 1945 for Algerians, the French have hitherto maintained a silence with regard to Setif. Thus, it caused something of a stir in Algeria, when a number of public figures, including the French Ambassador in Algiers, Hubert Colin de Verdière, and the then Foreign Minister, Michel Barnier, proceeded to break this silence and express some form of regret for what had happened sixty years ago.

In a sense, this could be seen as the French equivalent of Queen Elizabeth's expression of regret, though no apology, for the 1919 Jallianwallah Bagh massacre in Amritsar, during her visit to the city in 1997. It took place in the context of measures to improve relations between France and Algeria, summed up in President Chirac's recent offer of a pact of friendship, inspired to a large extent by French worries that their influence was diminishing in Algeria, to the benefit of other powers, notably the Americans.

These expressions of regret by the two former colonial powers have greatly differing significance, given their different historical experience of both colonialism and decolonisation, as well as the different trajectories of their postcolonial relations. Yet it is also clear that in both cases there was more to this than an attempt to make their peace with their former colonies, to put relations on a new footing and make a fresh start, drawing a line under the colonial period.

Significantly, in both cases, there have also been measures to validate the colonial endeavours. During his tour of African countries, the British Chancellor, Gordon Brown, regaled all who would listen with a list of the achievements of British imperialists. In line with much of recent British revisionist history of empire, he openly proclaimed that Britain had nothing to be ashamed of and much to be proud of.

In France, meanwhile, in spite of gestures in relation to Setif and the measures we have already noted, including the passing of a law in 2001 to decree slavery and the slave trade a crime against humanity and the proposed commemoration of the slave trade with an annual day of remembrance, now fixed as 10 May, a similar process is also at work to emphasise the positive elements of French imperialism. Most notably, this was codified in a new law, passed on 23 February 2005 at the instigation of members of the majority party, the UMP, to recognise the contribution and honour the memory of the *harkis* and others who fought alongside the French in the Algerian War and other colonial wars and to provide financial aid and other assistance for the members of this community, most of whom now reside in France.[14] While there was certainly a case to be made that the *harkis* were treated shamefully by the French, following the peace with the FLN, and many were abandoned to their fate as the French left the country, this was not taken on board by this law. The really remarkable part of this text was, in fact, the section dealing with the teaching of the history of French colonialism. Article 4 required that 'academic research programmes devote to the history of the French presence overseas and particularly in North Africa the attention it deserves'. Quite how this was to be achieved was another matter. However, more tendentiously, this article continued with the following statement: 'The school curriculum recognises the positive role of the French presence overseas, particularly in North Africa, and gives due prominence to the history and the sacrifices of those members of the French Armed Forces who originated in those lands, to which they are entitled.'

This provoked some outcry amongst French historians, including the veteran opponent of the Algerian War, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, who attacked this law on the grounds that it gave official backing to a revisionist version of French colonial history, particularly that of *Algérie française*, and renewed legitimacy to such discredited organisations as the OAS (see also Liauzu 2005 and widespread debate in the French press). It also provoked stinging criticism in Algeria, beginning with the General Secretary of the FLN, Abdelaziz Belkhadem (*Liberté*, 13 June 2005) and most notably by President Bouteflika, who spoke out passionately against the law on a number of occasions, accusing it of 'negationism' and 'revisionism', most notably in a speech delivered in Setif on 25 August 2005 (*El Watan*, 30 November 2005). There was also severe criticism from other parts of the francophone world, notably Martinique, where it was attacked by the independence supporter Alfred Marie-Jeanne, as well as Césaire's successor as Mayor of Fort-de France, Serge Letchimy, and the writers Patrick Chamoiseau and Edouard Glissant, amongst many others, following the failure of the socialists' attempt to have it repealed (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 4 December 2005). Aimé Césaire himself expressed his opposition, refusing to meet the Interior Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, during his visit to

Martinique, planned for 5 December (*Le Monde*, 15 December 2005). Attempts by the Minister for War Veterans, Hamlaoui Mekachera, himself a *harki* veteran, to designate the matter as an issue between French people, 'un problème franco-français' (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 16 September 2005), did little to address the questions raised. With the controversy showing no signs of dying down, President Chirac was prompted to set up a commission to try to defuse the tensions it had raised and ultimately took action to revoke the controversial clause in January 2006.

These developments seem to be acting as harbingers for a new, state-led, official, approach to the imperial past, on both sides of the Channel, in contrast to those who have argued recently that it is time to draw a line under the past, that postcolonialism and its various theories have now outlived any usefulness they might have had and that there is a need to move on to a new, 'normalised' phase in relations between the former colonial powers and the erstwhile colonies. All the signs are that it was perhaps too soon to write off the myths of colonial ideology, at least as long as the representatives of state are endeavouring to breathe new life into old imperialist dogma, whether or not this goes under the halo of saintly charity or civilised justice.

This chapter has highlighted some aspects of the role played in French national memory by the loss of the first French colony to achieve its independence, as well as the impact of the loss of one of the last, Algeria. The very different place that India occupies in the French postcolonial memory will be dealt with in Chapter 11.

Notes

1. 'Si les sociétés humaines sont historiques, cela ne provient pas simplement de ce qu'elles ont un passé, mais de ce qu'elles le *reprennent* à titre de *monument*' (Sartre (1943)1994: 545).
2. The celebration of Bastille Day has not been uninterrupted. It was discontinued for more than fifty years after its first institution as France's national day, until it was reinstated upon a proposal from Raspail in July 1880.
3. Laurent Greilsamer, talking about Steven Spielberg's project to build a video archive of the testimony of Holocaust survivors, to leave a documentary heritage for future generations, says: 'le propre de la mémoire n'est pas uniquement de célébrer le passé. La mémoire est un outil qui nourrit l'imaginaire.' However, the interpretation of this archive will be open to these future generations; all the memorialist can decide is what is to be recorded for posterity, not the meaning that will be given to it: 'Le réalisateur américain tourne en réalité le dos au passé. Complètement, définitivement. Il délaisse la mémoire d'hier et ses vecteurs traditionnels pour construire une mémoire pour demain' (*Le Monde*, 7 April 1995).
4. Edgard Pisani's (non-)recollections are particularly instructive (Einaudi 1991), as are the instances of false memory syndrome, particularly the confusion of October 1961 with the events of Charonne in February 1962, which had eight victims and has always been commemorated by the Left ever since (Einaudi 1991; Stora 1992: 78–79).
5. 'Nécessité de la réconciliation nationale? Singulier besoin d'oubli et de pardon, toujours à sens unique, au bénéfice de gens qui n'expriment souvent aucun regret et ne demandent aucun pardon' (Rollot 1992: 1).

6. See Stora 1992: 271–73, on the question of the archives. There was no shortage of print (e.g. Colette Jeanson and Francis Jeanson's *L'Algérie hors la loi*, Henri Alleg's *La Question*) or audio-visual material available (films by René Vautier – *Algérie en flammes* 1959, *Techniquement simple* 1971, *La Caravette, Avoir vingt ans dans les Aurès*; the documentary by Yves Courrier and Philippe Mounier, *La Guerre d'Algérie* 1970–71; Alain Resnais's *Muriel*; Robert Enrico's *La Belle Vie*; Jacques Davila's *Certaines nouvelles*; Mohamed Lakhdar-Hamina's *Vent des Aurès* 1967; Yves Boisset's RAS; Gilles Behat's *Le Vent de la Toussaint*), even if some of it was temporarily censored, such as Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Petit Soldat* (banned from 1960 to 1963), Gillo Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger*, made in 1966 but given a certificate by the censor in 1970, or Philippe Durand's *Lecteur Postal 89098*.

7. 'il ne faut pas laisser dire que la guerre d'Algérie, vue de France, serait depuis 1962 un point aveugle de la mémoire, que l'amnésie ou le refoulement, la censure ou la page blanche seraient son lot. Tout au contraire, son souvenir saigne depuis trente ans, vigilant, démembré et même, parfois, prolixe' (Rioux 1992: v).

8. Toute cette histoire est inscrite définitivement. Je n'en ai jamais parlé ni à ma femme qui est française, parce que je ne veux pas qu'elle le prenne pour elle, ni à mes enfants parce que ça ne sert à rien de leur transmettre des horreurs. Mais ces événements ont fait que je n'ai jamais demandé la nationalité française. A l'époque, j'étais soi-disant français. Mais je me sentais algérien parce qu'on me traitait de 'bicot'. (Amar K. interviewed by Philippe Bernard).

9. The *harkis* were Algerian auxiliaries who fought alongside the French army during the Algerian War.

10. See the website of Délégation aux célébrations nationales at http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/celebrations2004/autresanni.htm, retrieved 8 June 2004.

11. See the entry on 'Indépendance d'Haiti' on the website of Délégation aux célébrations nationales at http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/celebrations2004/haiti.htm, retrieved 8 June 2004.

12. See Paul Farmer's analysis of the collapse of the Aristide regime (Farmer 2004) and the debate to which it gave rise in subsequent issues of the *London Review of Books*.

13. On the attempt to settle claims for compensation in a more or less equitable manner, see Richard Adams's account of the process that has taken place in New Zealand (*Guardian*, 16 April 2004).

14. The text of the law may be consulted at http://66.249.93.104/search?q=cache:mls-5gRI_OEJ:www.admi.net/jo/20050224/DEFX0300218L.html+23+fevrier+2005&hl=en.

Chapter 9
The Postcolonial State: Problems of Development

It is now forty years or more since France formally relinquished the major part of her empire. In most cases, however, independence has not brought the new nations the rewards and results that were anticipated. The development of national liberation movements had given rise to a number of serious debates and problematic issues throughout the period of the national independence struggles. These were not resolved with the coming of independence to many of the French colonies at the beginning of the 1960s, although the debates in the ideological sphere necessarily took on a new shape in response to the changed circumstances. Nationalism on its own or when coupled with versions of socialist ideology has proved unable to deal with the problems besetting the former colonies, not least of which have been the economic difficulties and failure to achieve minimum standards of prosperity. The evolution of some of these unresolved issues was also framed by the tensions operating between the nation, on the one hand, and international forces and pressures, on the other.

This was a scenario that Fanon had already commented on in *Les Damnés de la terre*, where he wrote:

> nationalism, this magnificent hymn which roused the masses to struggle against their oppressors, will collapse in the wake of independence. Nationalism is not a political doctrine, it is not a programme. If you really wish to avoid the country slipping backwards, stalling and falling apart, there has to be a rapid transition from national consciousness to political consciousness. The nation has no existence apart from through a programme drawn up by a revolutionary leadership and adopted with lucidity and enthusiasm by the masses. There is a constant need to situate the national effort within the general context of the underdeveloped countries. (Fanon (1961)/1987: 146)

Here, in a nutshell, are encapsulated some of the key post-independence issues: the difficulties and importance of economic development; the need to transcend nationalism as a political ideology; the need for a fundamental change in culture at the popular level for development to take place; the importance of the transnational or international perspective.

Debates in the first decades following independence focused on the choice of economic model and the consequent choice of alignment or non-alignment with the capitalist or the socialist camp. Once the first flush of optimism had begun to dissipate, much ink was also expended on political questions, which have ranged from the foundations of the legitimacy of the postcolonial state and the particular forms it should take, including the congruence between the state apparatus and the nation, along with its often problematic definition, to relations between the state and the military forces. The question of democracy or democratisation has also been a major preoccupation, often via external prompting. Furthermore, in terms of international relations, debates have begun on the future of the nation-state itself, with the emergence of concepts such as supranationalism and transnationalism. At the heart of all these debates is the key question of the relationship between the former colonies and the erstwhile metropolitan power and its redefinition. All of this is clouded and reconfigured by the changing figures of global power play and the involvement of new actors on the scene.

Economic Models

The most important question facing the newly independent states was the choice of economic development model. Unsurprisingly, given the weak state of their economies, most of the former colonies opted for a voluntaristic policy of development, from top down, in which the intervention and control of the state was to have a role of paramount importance. How great the degree of state control was to be varied according to the circumstances and choices of individual countries. In some countries, the role of private enterprise initiatives was quite developed, often in collaboration with the former colonial power, whereas in others a more socialist-type approach was adopted, in which the state was to provide the primary economic impetus. Algeria, for instance, figured amongst the latter, with a Soviet-inspired model involving investment in state-run heavy industry and the nationalisation of agricultural land. The whole development was premised on developing industries that would provide a boost to further industrial development, the so-called 'industrialising industries' model (Perroux 1963; Adamson 2005).

Those countries, like Algeria, that followed this route, very quickly found themselves falling into the trap of escalating indebtedness, as a result of the cost of buying in the machinery and technology needed to equip this type of industrial development and the lack of sufficient self-generated finance capital. The problems were further compounded by the need to engage with international trade on terms that were inequitable and decided by other more powerful countries and interests. Thus, the processes governing the operation and development of the international

economy, both on a systemic macroeconomic level and on the level of particular economic, productive and commercial practices, most often led to divergence from and contradiction with the development policies of individual nation-states.

In the years following independence, it became clear to many that decolonisation had been restricted to the sometimes limited wresting of political control from the colonial national powers. The economic relations, which had assumed an intrinsically international dimension, were mostly left intact. In time, this led to the hypothesis that decolonisation was ultimately driven by the needs of the international economy, rather than by the political struggles of the colonised alone. Just as slavery outgrew its economic *raison d'être* and became unprofitable, so colonial relations and forms of management characteristic of imperialism in its heyday had become an expensive straitjacket, preventing further development of the international economy.

This hypothesis, that economic globalisation required decolonisation, contributes to an explanation of the failure, by and large, of the new nation-states to escape the domination of the most powerful forces in the international economy, but also the failure in terms of nation-building. The post-independence nation-state found itself unable to harness the economic resources of the country and its population for effective development. The forces that had created the success of the nation-state in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe (particularly its role in facilitating and protecting economic development) were no longer operative in the world of the multinational firm and international finance capital.

For the formerly colonised peoples, the problems resulting from the growth of global capitalism did not diminish with decolonisation and postcolonial independence. Moreover, these problems were compounded when the support systems provided by the former Soviet Union and its allies collapsed, along with the demise of the Soviet Union itself, following 1989. Thus, by 1999, the inequalities of wealth and living standards across the globe had grown in dramatic fashion, rather than diminishing. According to the United Nations' annual human development report, the combined wealth of the world's three richest families (those of Bill Gates, the Waltons of WalMart and the Sultan of Brunei), amounting to 135 billion dollars, was greater than the annual income of 600 million people in the least developed countries. Over the previous four years, the wealth of the world's 200 richest people doubled to more than one trillion dollars ($1,000 billion). At the same time, 1.3 billion people were living on less than a dollar a day. Thirty years previously, the gap between the richest fifth of the world's people and the poorest fifth stood at 30:1. By 1990, it had widened to 60:1. By 1999, it had grown to 74:1. In terms of consumption, the richest fifth accounted for 86 per cent and the bottom fifth for 1 per cent. 75 per cent of the world's telephone lines and 88 per cent of Internet users were in the West, with just 17 per cent of population (*Guardian*, 12 July 1999).

The imposition of the drastic 'cures' prescribed by the international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, with the proclaimed intention of bringing the state-subsidised economies of the former colonies back to economic, free-marketeering health, through combinations of ill-

prepared privatisations and the cutting back of basic public services, in fact further intensified the problems and plunged the peoples of these countries deeper into impoverishment, without any safety net. These 'structural adjustment programmes' were often the price to be paid for further funding to service the ongoing debt. Indeed, the final decades of the twentieth century saw the triumphalist rampaging of so-called free-market liberalism, with a vain trumpeting of the worldwide victory of capitalism, in a situation where the constraints (as well as the opportunities for capital) of the globalised economy, and in particular the globalisation of financial markets, had not been fully understood.

Much has been written about 'globalisation' over the last few decades. It was presented as a major new development in the economic, social and political organisation of the world. In fact, what was happening from the end of the 1980s represented a further phase in a process of expansion of global capitalism that had begun several centuries earlier. There were various attempts to analyse the novelty of the phenomenon of globalisation. Anthony Giddens, for instance, in his 1999 Reith Lectures, claimed that the quantitative development of world trade, combined with the loss of political sovereignty by nation-states and the full globalisation of financial markets, made possible through electronic transfer, amounted not just to a new development, but to a revolutionary transformation affecting the political, technological, cultural and economic spheres (*Observer*, 11 April 1999). Two factors that he cites as particularly responsible for this 'revolutionary' change were developments in the sphere of instantaneous communications and the move towards women's equality. Both seem inadequate explanations of any fundamental newness. The communications revolution and the creation of the global village had already been analysed by people like Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s (McLuhan 1964, McLuhan and Fiore 1967), even though further developments in new media and their potentialities have been realised since then. As for the 'revolutionary' change in women's position, this would come as a surprise to most women across the globe.

What was new, however, was the elimination of the ideological challenge to global capitalism as a result of the changes affecting the former Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc, on the one hand, and the overt conversion of the Chinese communists to the capitalist way, on the other. For a number of years, global capitalism has been able to portray itself as the only show in town.

While, in their initial euphoria, some commentators were able to portray this as the triumph of the West, most considered analyses, including that of Giddens, have highlighted the contradictory tendencies at work in the process of globalisation. On the one hand, it has meant a decrease in the power of nation-states to control their own economies, at the same time as it has led to the revival of local cultural identities as a response to globalising tendencies. The global spread of capitalism has not harmonised the situation of the world's peoples. On the contrary, as Giddens himself pointed out, in the first of his Reith Lectures, entitled 'New World Without End': 'The share of the poorest fifth of the world's population in global income has dropped from 2.3 per cent to 1.4 per cent over the past ten years. The proportion taken by the richest fifth, on the other hand, has risen (*Observer*, 11 April 1999). These

discrepancies concern not merely the levels of income but also the working and living conditions, including differences in terms of safety and environmental standards and regulations, quality of housing, access to education, health care, pensions and social insurance provision, physical security, leisure and cultural opportunities.

The instant dissemination of information and opinion through the global media has certainly had a homogenising effect, on the one hand, at the same time as it has hampered ideological and cultural control. Most significantly, the very processes at work in globalisation themselves create the means, the media, the ideas and institutions for their own subversion. This is particularly true at the ideological level, where the inherent contradictions are readily discernible. Thus, the ideology of global economic liberalism can easily be revealed to be at odds with the realities of protectionism associated with powerful economic powers and trading blocs, as with the restrictions on the free movement of labour, the authoritarian forms of the political state in individual countries and the dirigisme of international institutions.

Increasingly and inextricably, the globalisation of capital creates its own global counterculture. Resistance movements have not only developed on the local level but have increasingly come together on the global plane to protest against and challenge the hegemony of the rich, industrial nations, at meetings of the G7/G8 or the World Trade Organisation, in Seattle in 1999, Genoa in 2001 or Evian and Geneva in 2003, as well as with the establishment of events such as the World Social Forum, which has been meeting since 2000 (*Guardian*, 28 January 2003, 23 January 2004, 26 January 2005).

In addition, global capital has had to contend with the competition from rising economic powers. Whereas developments such as the outsourcing of production to take advantage of cheap labour and the lack of regulation in terms of working conditions and safety standards represent nothing new, there have nonetheless been significant new trends. The inclusion of services in this outsourcing (in communications, health care, finance, tourism, etc.) represents one such development, as does the high level of technology becoming available in countries such as India, previously perceived as 'backward'. The cultural sphere is also no longer characterised by one-way traffic from the West. Increasingly, cultural imports from the former colonies are finding their way into the mainstream of American and European societies, extending beyond the confines of the communities resulting from large-scale migrations in previous years. The increasing Hispanic influence in the US, along with the productions of Chinese and Indian cinema, are just some of the examples one could quote here. Indeed, the rise of China, in particular, as a world economic power has been spectacular over the last decade. Its economy entered a qualitatively new phase with its direct investment in American and European economies, leading to the acquisition of major Western companies such as IBM's personal computer business and the interest in acquiring a stake in the British motor vehicle industry, through MG Rover (*Guardian*, 23 February 2005).

How have these developments been reflected in the francophone world?

Within the context of *Francophonie*, the focus has been to a very large extent on the domain of culture. Economic concerns have traditionally been relegated to a

secondary position, although, as we have seen, the theme of sustainable development, chosen for the *Francophone* Summit in Ougadougou in 2004, marked something of a new departure.

The pursuit of bilateral policies between France and Africa has meant that, in the relations between France and her former colonies, it has largely been business as usual. France has attempted to secure preferential terms for its former African colonies in association agreements with the European Union. In return, these countries remain within the franc zone and are happy to purchase French arms, in return for a degree of paternalistic protection, often for highly corrupt, authoritarian regimes (Chipman 1989; Andereggen 1994). Those who challenge this cosy arrangement quickly feel the sharp end of France's instruments of power. This was the case for Ahmed Sékou Touré when he chose independence, rather than autonomy, for Guinea in 1958 and de Gaulle responded by the immediate withdrawal of all French personnel, equipment and aid, wreaking havoc on the administrative and economic structures of the new state. The recent stand-off between France and the Gbagbo regime in the Ivory Coast has been largely influenced by the same mentality (*Libération*, 9 November 2004; *Le Monde*, 16 December 2004).

Problems of Nationalist Discourse

While all of the former colonies have to come to grips with serious economic difficulties and a failure of development really to take off, the handful of former colonies that had eschewed the umbrella of French protectionism, under the impulse of a nationalist discourse of rupture, were also to face a crisis of confidence in the power of their dominant nationalist ideology to deliver development.

This is notably so in the case of Algeria, where the armed liberation struggle was launched in 1954 under the banner of nationalism and where nationalism remains the official ideology of the state (Stora 2001). In the presidential election campaign of 2004, nationalism remained a powerful rallying call for the candidates. The incumbent and successful candidate, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, fought his campaign on the need for national reconciliation. However, Louisa Hanoune, of the Parti des Travailleurs, also repeatedly stressed the need for national unity as well as the indivisibility of the nation (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 24 March 2004).

While the form of the nationalist discourse has remained fairly stable, there have nonetheless been significant changes in its content, some of which reflect the change in its role, from tool of the national liberation struggle to official ideology of the post-independence state. Moreover, some of the contradictions and debates that have been evident from the beginning continue to emerge from time to time and raise important questions for the future of the country, not least for the vital question of its economic and social development. Increasingly, the question is being raised of the effectiveness of the nation-state and the appropriateness of the nationalist discourse to deal with the real problems of inequality, domination and exploitation, the primary causes of which lie in global economic relations of production.

A number of factors came into play when the political structures of the newly independent countries were being shaped. On the one hand, the influence of the political culture of the metropolitan power remained highly significant at the same time as other influences and models, such as those of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries, as well as those of other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. On the other hand, there was also a clear strand of thinking that sought to prioritise a more 'authentic', 'indigenous' form of political organisation, to construct forms of state power that would be specifically oriented to the historical and cultural traditions of the countries concerned.

The actual structures that came into being were, for the most part, a result of a variable mix of theoretical considerations and practical political contingencies. Among the most important determining factors were the immediate background to independence and the conditions in which that independence had been achieved. In particular, where this had been the result of a long and bitter armed struggle, as in the case of Algeria, the role that the Liberation Army had played in that struggle would be reflected in the relations that would henceforth prevail between the political structures and the armed forces.

Even where this had not been the case and independence had been achieved on a more consensual basis, the nationalism underpinning anticolonial movements in the colonies would be a key factor in defining the new states, one of whose prime tasks was seen as embodying the will of the nation. How far the states were able to express this will in any meaningful manner is a question to be explored. Where independence had been conceded by France without conflict, a particular kind of political class had emerged in the former colonies that owed its position in large part to French patronage and protection.

The influence of French Jacobin ideology must not be underestimated. The French Republic, expressing the sovereign will of the nation, proved a ready model for the new states, along with a well-embedded tradition of state dirigisme. Indeed, the new states had to look no further than France itself for a model of effective state power and strong presidential leadership, inspired by an ideal of the unanimity of the nation's citizens rallying to the one national voice articulated through the leader. De Gaulle had, at the time of his return to power in 1958, insisted on a new constitution forged along these lines, in which political differences were relegated to the sidelines as a factor of weakness in the unity of the nation.

In a very real sense, national unity and the construction of nationhood were undoubtedly seen as priorities. Where opposition to French rule had indeed proved a unifying factor, there were many other forces pulling the new nations apart. It was the exception, rather than the rule, that the new countries formed already existing, quasi-natural, real geographical, historical, cultural or ethnic entities in their own right. Often their boundaries had been created in an arbitrary, artificial manner, according to imperial rivalries and colonial administrative convenience and concerns. One of the overriding concerns was therefore to bring together an often diverse and diffuse population under the authority of a 'national' state.

Clearly, we are no longer living in the same political climate as in the heyday of the national liberation struggles. The certainties of the nationalist movements are a

thing of the past and no longer is it appropriate for identity to be defined in terms of a common enemy. Already in 1971, Nabile Farès felt the need to point out that this type of self-definition was passé. In *Un Passager de l'Occident*, he wrote: 'The one-time pretensions of Algeria (and the Algerians) to define itself in relation to its Other (France and the French) are now over. Algeria needs to identify with itself. And to achieve that, it does need not to go running after the country of which it was a colony at a given moment of its history' (Farès 1971: 70).

For an alternative, positive, national identity, the state that enjoyed sufficient authority and legitimacy could build upon a forward-looking national project of development. Where the state was in a position of weakness, the obvious recourse was to a model of the nation relying on ethnic and historical associations. In Algeria's case, the choice was to be for a compromise, in which a modernist political project was rationalised in terms of an identity – the Arab–Islamic identity, based on ethnic and religious ties. However, increasingly, as Hugh Roberts has pointed out, attempts by the state to promote support in the name of national unity and uniformity have been replaced by a political manipulation of opposition, in which different parties are allocated specific mobilising functions, in a sophisticated version of the politics of 'divide and rule':

> As the state's economic policy had shifted to the right, the state's political strategy in relation to the society changed from the intermittent mobilisation of support to the continuous mobilisation of opposition. The advent of 'divide and rule' as the watchword in ruling circles signified the evaporation of the nationalist idea as the source of the state's orientation and *raison d'être*. (Roberts 2003: 355)

This was not a strategy that was limited to Algeria.

Legitimacy of the Postcolonial State

In 1999, Mike Phillips raised some of these same issues in connection with the new Eastern European states that had emerged from the collapse of Soviet communism. He talked of an argument he had with a Czech professor who claimed that 'the rights of citizenship in the East would always be conditional on historical and ethnic associations'. Phillips claimed that Eastern Europeans could not understand the notion of a citizenship divorced from ethnicity. Given the weakness of the state in Eastern European countries, in terms of authority and legitimacy or 'prestige with their own citizens', 'their only mechanism for sustaining consent is a model of belonging and exclusion based on ethnicity'.

He contrasted these states with those of Western Europe, which had now achieved 'a high degree of cohesiveness and cultural self-confidence' and were used to obtaining consent through citizenship. The post-communist states, on the other hand, were 'just emerging from far-reaching isolation, have next to no experience of multi-lateral co-operation, and a memory of hierarchical soviet control'. In these circumstances, the post-communists 'view formal regulation as a starting point for

negotiation. In this world the political system turns on personal rather than institutional power. And part of the cultural capital in the East is a moralising, historicising language largely abandoned in the West' (*Guardian*, 10 April 1999).

Much of this could equally well apply to the former colonies, whose reliance on liberation struggle nationalist credentials for legitimising state power now looks increasingly threadbare.

In Algeria, not only did the key date of 1 November 1954 provide the myth for the founding of the nation. It also provided the basis for the legitimacy of the FLN as single party and ultimately for the state that came into being at independence. Indeed, the process went even further by giving sole historical legitimacy to the original core of founders, the *'chefs historiques'* ('historical leaders'), by dint of their having been the first to launch the insurrection. Indeed, this principle has proved astonishingly resilient, even after the collapse of the FLN state as such from the end of the 1980s.

The role of the war of independence in bestowing historical legitimacy on the political leadership also extended to the army, which, because of its war record, could also claim to provide the natural rulers of Algeria, either directly (as in the case of Colonel Houari Boumedienne – effective head of state from 1965 to 1978 – and General Liamine Zeroual – President from 1994 to 1998) or through endorsement of particular civilian politicians, including the current President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika. The fact that all presidential candidates in the election of 1999 had to have proven credentials in the liberation struggle, with all non-veterans disqualified, amply bears this out. Four qualifying candidates were in fact barred from these elections, including Mahfoud Nahnah of Hamas, who was barred from standing by the Constitutional Council, because he was not a proven *moudjahidin* during the war of independence. Louisa Hanoune and Noureddine Boukrouh were also barred (*Guardian*, 8 April 1999). The special role of the army has been recognised, even by opponents of the regime, such as Hocine Aït Ahmed of the FFS (Front des Forces Socialistes), who stated in an interview: 'We are not against the army; we need a strong army, but there has to be a progressive transfer of power to civilian institutions' (*Le Monde*, 19 February 1999).

The army had, of course, had a decisive role to play not only in providing political leadership but also in the cancellation of the second round of the elections in 1991, and the stalling of the move to multiparty democracy, in the face of a likely victory by the Islamists, leading to a decade of bloody violence and civil conflict. Some sections of the army nonetheless saw the need for the political rulers to have a legitimacy through the ballot box as a necessary precondition for the resolution of the political and economic problems of the country and in order to attract outside investment. The need for transparency in the electoral process thus became the declared position of the powerful army Chief of Staff, General Mohamed Lamari, at the time of the 1999 presidential elections (*Le Monde*, 19 February 1999). Since then, the relationship between the army and the civil power, under the leadership of President Bouteflika, has gradually evolved, with what appears to be a shift in the balance of power. The culmination of this process to date has been the 'retirement'

of Lamari and his replacement by General Gaïd Salah (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 4 August, 17 November 2004).

Other former French colonies in Africa have had similarly close relationships between the civil power and the military, although they have lacked the veneer of legitimacy bestowed upon the Algerian leadership by the war of liberation. This has often been with the overt support of France, which also provided significant support for the military dictator Colonel Mobutu in the former Belgian Congo, as it has for authoritarian civil regimes with little real basis for claiming legitimacy to govern.

There have, however, been a number of challenges to these cosy arrangements since the end of the 1980s.

Challenges and Realignments

One of the most important challenges, particularly in the case of Algeria, has come from political movements and ideologies basing themselves on Islam (Addi 1992; Entelis 1997; Roy 2004). This is not an entirely new development. The roots of political Islam go way back into history. However, the forms that it is now taking have developed their own character and momentum. Its position in relation to the nation-state is one of its key defining features. Another is its concentration on questions of politics, ideology and culture and its comparative neglect of questions relating to economic and development issues. The basic realities of the world economy are not challenged in any way.

On the one hand, political Islam has links with the resistance to colonialism, which couched itself in religious terms in many instances. The writings of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani against British imperialism in the nineteenth century were particularly influential. Abdelkader's struggle against the French conquest of Algeria took inspiration from his own Sufi beliefs. The reforming, modernising religious movement around the Association of Algerian Ulama, founded by Abdelhamid Ben Badis in 1931, was a significant spur to growing anticolonial resistance in the early part of the twentieth century. It saw education and cultural activities as a vital part in the regeneration of society (Roberts 2003). Moreover, Islam was to figure as a key element in the framing of FLN ideology, although this was not widely appreciated outside Algeria, where contemporary knowledge of the Algerian struggle was to a large extent relayed through the writings of Fanon and other anticolonial activists, who stressed the modern, secular elements of the movement, rather than its religious content.

In more recent times, political Islam has reconfigured itself not just in opposition to the former colonial powers and, in more general terms, the 'West', but also in specific opposition to what it perceives as the secular nationalism of the anticolonial movements and post-independence states (Roy 1992; Carlier 1995; Roberts 2003). Its anti-modernist opposition to Western influence and defence of tradition and doctrinal purity have been able to achieve great resonance, given the evident failings of post-independence regimes, particularly the failure to deal with basic issues of poverty. As a vehicle of critique, with a discourse based on abstract notions, such as truth, freedom, equality and justice, it has proved extremely potent.

When it comes to presenting a positive programme for taking the nation forward, it has been less effective (Mernissi 1993; Roberts 2003).

Although Islamist political movements operate within the confines of the nation-state, as the arena for contesting power, they also represent, on the one hand, a retreat into the sub-national, with the family group, governed by religious practice, promoted to the basic unit of society. On the other, their perspective transcends the limits of the secularly determined nation-state, by an appeal to the supranational authority of the wider Muslim community, or umma.

Women who are perceived to have succumbed to Western influence have been particularly targeted by those who support a fundamentalist political Islam. A Western style of dress or knowledge, use or predilection for a European language has been sufficient to provoke murderous attacks. The legal position of women within the family and the more general question of women's rights have been determined in relation to the Islamist lobby for what is claimed to be a strict application of Shariah law. While many of these ideas have been contested by Muslims who put forward an alternative interpretation of the Koran and the role of women in Islam, there is no doubt that the dominant strand has so far been constituted by those who seek to curtail women's rights. As we shall see, the state in Algeria has trodden an ambiguous path on this matter (Gadant 1995).

It has to be said that this specific targeting of women for domination and oppression, in one form or another, is characteristic of many of the religious movements that have sprung up to articulate the frustrations of men in situations where they feel unjustly deprived of their right to power. The anti-women focus of the Hindutva movement in India, associated with the defence of Hinduism considered to be under siege from Islam, is a prime example here. There have been attempts to revive the glorification of the practice of widow-burning, or suttee, following the self-immolation of the teenage widow Roop Kanwar in Rajasthan in 1987 (Sen 2001). Important figures in Indian Hinduism, including the Shankaracharya, or chief priest, at Puri, one of the most important figures in Indian Hinduism, have spoken out in support of this practice. Since then, there have been other reported cases, one of the latest in 2002 in a village in Madhya Pradesh.

Tariq Ramadan has pointed out that repressive application of Shariah law, in terms of harsh punishments without due legal process, is particularly targeted against women: 'the application of the sharia today is used by repressive powers to abuse women, the poor and political opponents within a quasi-legal vacuum' (*Guardian*, 30 March 2005). He also points out that this 'strict and visible display of punishment' is often carried out in 'opposition to "the west"', on the 'basis of a simplistic reasoning that stipulates that "the less western, the more Islamic"' and that it is often the result of 'being obsessed by the formalistic application of severe punishments in the name of frustration or feelings of alienation perpetuated by the domination of the west' (*Guardian*, 30 March 2005).

Challenges to the relevance of the nation-state to the modern world have come from diverse quarters, although it is too soon to consign it to obsolescence, given the role it continues to play in ordering and controlling the real economic, social,

political, cultural forces and relations that impinge on people's lives. However, there is no doubt that realignments are taking place, with shifts in approach and new alliances stemming from a rethinking of possibilities and, in their turn, contributing to the creation of new scenarios.

In Algeria, it would appear that the challenge by political Islam has been seen off, at least for the time being. This has also entailed a reconfiguration, to some extent, of the dominant nationalist ideology.

A number of commentators, including Bachir Medjahed writing in the *Quotidien d'Oran* (4 August 2004), have described this process as 'a new national order' coming into being as a result of the presidential elections, which took place in April 2004. According to this analysis, one of the new elements is the emergence of a strong presidency, constructing a broad national unity, and, in effect, bringing all political forces under its wing, while taking over all the levers of power. In effect, the new presidential alliance is deemed to be taking over the erstwhile role of the single party, FLN, absorbing actual, as well as potential, sources of opposition, in terms of political parties and movements, trade unions, media, with a greater or lesser degree of willingness on their part. Increasingly, President Bouteflika, with his 85 per cent majority, is looking like a providential leader in the Gaullist mode, not only through his call for national unity in the name of national reconciliation, but also in his appreciation of the role of the different political forces in achieving this unity. In the campaign speech he gave at Bouira on 22 March 2004, he stressed (as de Gaulle had done in his famous speech at Bayeux in 1946 (de Gaulle 1970)) how the goal of national unity was above the particular interests and differences represented by individuals and political parties and could only be achieved through a reconfiguration of the political landscape. Significantly, this reconfiguration entailed the restoration of a special political role for the FLN, which, Bouteflika insisted, could not be considered as a party like any other but was a national political organ, representing the entire nation. As such, it could not be appropriated by any particular individual or faction. This did not mean, however, that he was proposing a return to the single-party system. Rather, political pluralism was not to be enacted in such a way as to promote division and dissension, but all organisations, political and social, provided that they saw themselves as part of the heritage of the national revolution, part of the 'revolutionary family', could be, and should be, brought together under the presidential banner. Thus, he proclaimed that he spoke to the nation 'in the name of the FLN, the RND, the HMS, in the name of all the mass organisations (peasants, workers, women), of civil society, of the victims of terrorism and the revolutionary family (*moudjahidin*, the families of *moudjahidin* and the children of *chouhada* (martyrs of the Revolution)' (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 23 March 2004).[1] Since then, the President has indeed accepted the invitation to become what he claims will be the 'Honorary' President of the FLN (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 2 February 2005), though it remains to be seen how far this reconfiguration of Algerian nationalism really marks a fundamentally new phase in Algerian politics.

Certainly, there has been no lack of sceptical political comment. Some have seen Bouteflika's huge majority as a reflection, on the one hand, of an over-reliance on the

'leader', not as the sign of a mature democracy. Others have pointed to the weariness of the population after over a decade of violence and unrest, seeing Bouteflika essentially as a balancing act, keeping the peace between the different parties, but incapable of taking the nation forward. Kamel Daoud, in an editorial just before the presidential election of 8 April, expressed this cynical view of a nation that has become stuck in an impasse:

> In Algeria, the 8 April will merely be followed by the 9 April. There will still be the same torpor, which passes as our nationhood. There will still be the same land, where, in the guise of the strong nation, they try to plant new housing. There will still be the same self-doubt, about ourselves and our own, which binds us together in the guise of belonging to a community and a people. Bouteflika or somebody else, it doesn't matter. No one will be willing to wield the knife and carry out the drastic surgery needed to cut out the blockages which are condemning the country to a state of static equilibrium rather than the thrill of conquest … in other words, this is a utilitarian nationalism. (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 24 March 2004)

There are others who hold a less sceptical view of the prospects of moving forward. In any event, what is clear is that in order to break out of the impasse, there will have to be serious changes, not least in the prevailing culture.

Development and Culture

The importance of culture in relation to nationalism and nationhood has already been discussed in Chapter 6. Here, it is a question of its role in the development process, not as a superficial, optional 'extra' – the icing on the cake, as it were – but as a crucial primary element that has to be taken into account in planning to achieve development. In order to be able to determine the parameters of any future development plan, to assess the means and resources available and to understand the difficulties and obstacles that will present themselves, it is clearly essential to have a profound knowledge of the concrete socio-economic and political conditions operating in the current society, as well as the historical processes that have shaped this present reality. It is also clear that this knowledge needs to extend to the relevant cultural factors.

The successful implementation of any development plan will, of course, also rely on a vision of a better future, which will inevitably involve theoretical and political choices, in terms of both the goals chosen and the means selected to bring them to fruition. There may very well be a warranted degree of scepticism with regard to fine words and rhetoric. Yet, without the vision, largely expressed through the ideologies and discourses articulated by a political leadership, there will be no mobilisation of the human resources essential to the project. The rhetoric on its own will obviously not be enough. Equally necessary is a strategy to bring about the cultural development of the people involved, as appropriate to the particular development

model chosen. This will involve people signing up to the particular goals and methods for achieving them, which they cannot do unless they are convinced of their value and have a sense of ownership. It will also mean the transformation of behaviour, attitudes and ways of doing thing in terms of the technology used, the knowledge acquired, management and labour practices, as well as professional, social and personal relations (Saad 2005). There will almost certainly be particular cultural obstacles to change. How they are identified and dealt with largely depends on the political choices adopted.

Where debates have focused on culture in the years following decolonisation, they have tended to articulate a number of oversimplified oppositions, such as Western versus non-Western, modernity versus tradition, universalism versus particularism. The choice is presented as one between two antagonistic cultural systems, rather than between different cultural practices. The opposing cultures are constituted by their opponents as a 'bloc' to be resisted. For the West, this has meant the construction of representations of 'other' cultures, in the guise of orientalism, communism and, most recently, Islam. Reciprocally, Western culture is often viewed as a monolithic bloc, moreover, one that has had pretensions to universality for the last three centuries or so, aided and abetted by its association with the development of modernity on the scientific, economic and technological planes. [2]

This association has sometimes led, and often inappropriately, to a displacement of resistance to the cultural plane. The defence of cultural diversity, not least through the organs and efforts of *La Francophonie*, has often been the main response to the process of globalisation, even though the latter is primarily and essentially an economic and financial development. While there is undoubtedly a legitimate place for efforts to safeguard different cultural practices and phenomena and ensure that they have the space to develop with a sufficient degree of autonomy, the proponents of cultural diversity have tended to assume an essentialist, static conception of culture, in which the cultures tend to become fixed in the past, with a tendency for tradition to become the keystone, leading to ossification and stultification.

This view of cultures as distinct from each other, homogeneous and closed has become incorporated into a certain brand of political discourse that highlights the existence of irreconcilable cultural differences. Not only are these differences set in stone, as part of monolithic cultural systems, with no meaningful interaction possible between each other, but also they are considered to lead inexorably to conflict, not just on the cultural plane, but in the sphere of politics (Huntington 1996). This approach not only discounts the dynamic aspects of cultural practices and the mutual influences that different cultural practices can have upon each other, the 'inter-cultural', it also – paradoxically, given the way it attributes political effects to cultural causes – ignores the actual cultural practices and processes that operate on the political plane, commonly defined as political culture.

One of the key aspects, indeed the most crucial aspect, defining a national political culture is the way in which the citizen relates or aspires to relate to the state. It assumes its whole significance in the context of plans for development, which aim to involve the whole nation in their formulation and implementation. Yet, in many

of the post-independence former colonies, the lack of such involvement has been a noticeable feature, linked to their exclusion in many cases from any active relation of citizenship with regard to the state.

The pressures on these regimes to 'democratise', characteristic of initiatives by so-called 'donor' states and international financial institutions in the 1990s, were usually rationalised in terms of simplistic analyses of the reasons for their lack of political accountability. The failings of the regimes were often presented in terms of personal lust for power or corruption. At the time when Tony Blair's Commission for Africa was delivering its report, the same discourse was apparent and corruption was presented as one of the major factors for lack of progress in development terms, even if the responsibility for stopping it was not limited to the Africans themselves (*Guardian*, 12 March 2005). Thus, in spite of the new subtleties, it comes from the same roots as the crude old racially inspired explanations of endemic laziness, criminality, violence and so on that were brought into play both during and after colonialism as such. Sometimes the political difficulties have been put down to the fundamental cultural 'Otherness' of the people concerned. However, rarely have the problems of post-independence political culture been subjected to serious analysis.

Structural factors on the level of the economy itself may have a part to play in facilitating or obstructing the participation of the population in political life in their capacity as citizens. Where conditions of general economic collapse or scarcity apply and people are excluded from participation in economic life, their involvement as citizens will also be affected. However, in countries such as Algeria, endowed with natural resources, such as oil and gas, producing vast revenues for the state with little requirement of labour, the autonomy resulting from the development of a rentier state, not dependent on taxation of its population, may also lead to a divorce between the state and its political institutions, on the one hand, and the citizens, who count for little in economic terms, on the other.

External economic factors also have their role to play. The lack of control by the post-independence states over their own economies because of the international systemic structures that predominate, their indebtedness and subjection to the grip of international financial institutions, the unfair terms of trade in world markets – all of these lead to a further depreciation of the political capital of these states.

Moreover, some of the difficulties have arisen as a result of the particular policies of post-independence governments. If the measure of women's emancipation is taken as a key measure of social progress, then it has to be said that much remains to be achieved on this score. If women are still not playing their full part as citizens in Algeria, for instance, this is largely due to the timidity of successive regimes, bowing to the pressures of religious and social conservatism to embody their subordinate, minor status in the legislative codes of the country, in spite of the formal assertion of the equality of men and women in the Constitution. Although the reform of the Family Code, instituted in 1984 and enshrining women's inferior status through their effective definition as minors, under the guardianship of a male family member (Lalami-Fatès 1996; Lloyd 2005), was promised by the successful candidate in the 2004 presidential election campaign (*Liberté*, 22 March 2004), there has still been

some reluctance to go too far too quickly and a desire not to rock the boat in the face of perceived or actual resistance. Attempts to have the Code revoked by the women's movement resulted in some modification and tinkering in 2005, but no radical repeal, under perceived pressure to placate the traditional Islamic lobby (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 12 January 2005; *Liberté*, 7 and 28 February 2005).

It has, though, proved increasingly difficult to justify the status quo. The past record of women's involvement in the war of liberation has been a powerful argument for full recognition of women's rights, in spite of the reluctance of the political establishment to take on the traditional conservatism upholding family values, as one of the factors of cohesion of the Algerian nation in their struggle against French colonialism (Touati 1996). Moreover, their present role in society is currently evolving rapidly. As a result of the education policies of successive regimes, tremendous progress has been made in female education at all levels of the system. As yet, however, the promotion of women employed in the formal sector, at any rate, is lagging far behind, though there are indications of some improvement. In 1989, fewer than one in twenty women in the active population had a job in Algeria. This was lower than comparable figures for the neighbouring Maghrebian countries, Morocco and Tunisia (Touati 1996; Lloyd 2005). By 2000, figures suggested that there were 13.9 per cent of employed women in the active population (Barka 2005), and Boutheina Cheriet, the minister in charge of the family and women's affairs, claimed in 2003 that women constituted 18 per cent of the labour force in the formal sector (*Liberté*, 29 April 2003).

The importance of this question lies not just in the area of justice and equal human rights; it also concerns the role that women have to play in the development process. There is now a considerable body of evidence that the significant involvement of women in a project of sustainable development is one of the main factors contributing to the likelihood of its success. On the general level, there is, of course, the scandalous waste of human resources, when women, who constitute more than half of the earth's population, are denied proper access to decent health care, education, training and employment and are refused equal rights and practically excluded from public life. More specifically, however, women play a vital role in certain fields of activity, for which they often bear full, or the main, responsibility: for instance, domestic, household work, the provision and management of food, fuel and water resources, childcare, agricultural and horticultural work.

It is now recognised that the three 'pillars' of sustainable development – the protection of the environment, economic well-being and social justice – can only be achieved if women's role is fully taken into account in any development strategy (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2002).

The protection of the environment requires in-depth understanding of the ways in which women make use of natural resources and the knowledge they already possess in this area. It also requires a specific awareness of the different ways in which the degradation of the environment affects men and women, as well as a recognition of their rights and specific responsibilities in planning and managing these matters (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2002).

The economic well-being of a society depends of making full use of all the available human resources, both male and female. At the present time, it has been estimated that women make up 70 per cent of the earth's population living in absolute poverty, in a world in which a majority of families rely on a single woman to head the household and provide for its members. Women are twice as likely to live in poverty as men (Department for International Development (UK) 2000).

It follows that, if the eradication of poverty is to be made a reality, there has to be a focus on improving the economic situation of women, through measures to improve the organisation of the labour market and ensure equality of wages, access to education, health care and credit facilities (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2002). For instance, a study of the main Indian banks has shown that only 11 per cent of its clients taking out loans are women; in Zaire, the proportion is only 14 per cent (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2002). Research by the World Bank in Kenya has estimated that, if girls had the same opportunities to attend school as boys, then there would be an increase in food production of the order of 9–22 per cent and this figure would rise to 25 per cent if there were universal primary education (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2002).

Moreover, the inequality and discrimination that exist on the legal and political planes constitute a major obstacle to the involvement of women in social and public spheres and have clear repercussions on the social conditions that are needed to ensure the success of any strategy of sustainable development (see Department for International Development (UK) 2000; UNIFEM 2000).

Any improvements in the position of women imply a voluntaristic policy on the part of the institutions of state. However, this alone is not enough; there also has to be a profound transformation of values and practices on the level of culture, which only occurs when there is movement from the grass roots, as well as from the top, and the two achieve some kind of positive symbiosis, as much in the formulation of objectives as in the choice of means to bring them to fruition. There is no need to sign up to an essentialist view of women's nature to believe that women's own role in cultural transformation is crucial. It may be convenient, and even refreshing, to indulge in some of the more benign conceptions of women's influence for the good of humanity, such as that expressed by Ali Mazrui here:

> The fate of humanity may indeed depend upon creative communication and androgynization of the command structure. Those social movements which enhance contact and communication and those which seek to expand the role of women may turn out to be the most critical of them all. A greater role for women is needed in the struggle to tame the sovereign state, civilize capitalism, and humanize communication.
>
> To the question 'what is civilization ?' it may one day be possible to answer 'humane communication in a truly androgynized world. (Mazrui 1990: 63)

It is certainly better than a belief in women as essentially inferior, weak and subordinate, or even as the source of all evil. However, it is certainly not necessary, or even helpful, to subscribe to idealisations of women's feminine nature to understand the negative consequences for the development of society as a whole of women's inferiority and exclusion.

The 1979 United Nations Convention on discrimination against women requires governments that have signed up to it to institute full equality for women in constitutional and juridical terms. At the same time, it contains a clause (5a) according to which member states will modify the systems and models of socio-cultural behaviour of men and women in order to achieve the eradication of prejudice and customs, or any other type of practice, based on the supposed inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotypical roles for men and women.

This is the Convention to which Algeria became a signatory in 1997, subject to the proviso that Koranic law would have primacy if there were any conflict between the two. This was in line with the approach adopted since independence, which has consisted in finding a compromise, a middle way between improving women's status, on the one hand, and respecting traditional family and social structures and attitudes, on the other. The conclusion of the 1999 report of the Algerian government on the application of the Convention is still very much along these lines.

In spite of this, there has been significant progress in a number of areas. In August 2001, the number of women appointed to positions as *juges d'instruction* increased from fifteen to 137, out of a total of 404, and several women have been appointed as judges. Most major political parties now have a women's section. Family planning programmes have been implemented, leading to a fall in fertility rate (per woman) from 6.7 in 1980 to 3.5 in 1998, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) statistics. Moreover, the number of women active in the labour force has continued to grow, from 36 per cent in 1997 (United Nations 2000), although, as we have seen, they remain in a minority position as a proportion of the overall workforce in the formal sector.

In the political sector, there has been little progress. Women members of the legislative assembly accounted for only 3.8 per cent of seats in January 2000, as reported in the UNIFEM biennial report, *Progress of the World's Women 2000* (UNIFEM 2000), and there has only ever been a smattering of women in government. It is significant that, to counter reaction to the lack of real progress on the Family Code, President Bouteflika urged Algerian women to get involved in politics as the way forward (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 9 March 2005). It has to be said that there are few countries in the world that can lay claim to a much better record on women's participation in political life. In terms of equal opportunities and representation, politics appears to be the last area in which progress is made.[3]

Education is also a highly significant area for a country like Algeria. Since independence, the indicators show that enormous progress has been made in female education. The female illiteracy rate went down from 76 per cent in 1980 to 46 per cent in 2000 (United Nations 2000); in 2002, only 14 per cent of girls aged fifteen to twenty-four years old were illiterate (UNIFEM 2000). Yet, if the number of girls

attending secondary school is now higher than that of boys (in the ratio of 104 to 100), these figures only represented 60 per cent of girls in the same age group in 1999/2000 (UNIFEM 2000). Moreover, these particular figures do not tell the whole story. It is not just a question of the number of girls continuing their studies to university level, or even the number of women on the teaching staff, even though, here again, remarkable progress has been made. They need to be seen in the light of other statistics, such as those relating to failure and dropout rates in education, the distribution of men and women and the respective rates of promotion at all levels in the work sphere. There are also qualitative factors that need to be taken into account, particularly the content of the curriculum and how it addresses questions relating to differences between the sexes, teaching and research methods and the types of courses on offer. Equally important are the choice of career, the structures of the educational institutions and workplaces and the roles attributed to men and women in the relevant hierarchies. Last but by no means least, the sociocultural and ideological context has to be taken into account, along with such matters as the question of access to the organs of intellectual debate and the media of information and representation. The disparity that exists between the high level of schooling of Algerian girls and their subsequent lower level of participation in all levels of economic, social and public life raises the question of how the transition between education and the wider society is effected and how it can be improved.

Condorcet, Fourier and others have claimed that the stage of progress reached by a human society can be gauged by the manner in which women are treated. This is not just a measure of that development, however; cultural change in respect of women may also be seen as a necessary condition of that development taking place at all. The UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, took this line in a statement on 5 June 2002, in which he said that 'there is no doubt that any society which does not put at its heart the full participation of women is doomed to failure' (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2002).

There have been indications of a willingness to face up to some of these problems. In Algeria, there have been attempts to sort out some of the issues relating to a deficit of citizenship. The diversity of the nation's population, in terms of ethnic and historical origins, is beginning to be recognised. Negotiations over the grievances of the Kabyle population are replacing confrontation and repression, and the Berber language, Tamazight, has been reluctantly recognised, although its precise status is still not yet determined and it is unlikely to achieve full official status as one of the nation's languages.

However, it is also acknowledged that the resolution of some of the issues requires initiatives and programmes transcending the national frontiers. Some of these issues will be dealt with in Chapter 11.

Notes

1. FLN, Front de Libération nationale; RND, Rassemblement national démocratique; HMS, Harraket Moujtamaa es Silm.
2. There are a number of instances where countries such as nineteenth-century Egypt under Muhammad Ali or Japan, which opted for modernisation of its economy from 1868 while safeguarding Japanese culture, have attempted to have one without the other, the technology without the culture (Mazrui 1990: 4–5).
3. One notable exception is the National Assembly of Wales, where, since 2003, complete parity between men and women has been achieved and there is a majority of women in the executive. This has come about because of the specific voluntaristic measures adopted.

Chapter 10
The Other Within

The discussion of postcoloniality has so far focused on the evolution of relations between France and its former colonies and the discourses, ideologies, debates and institutions through which they have been articulated. This chapter will now look at further aspects of the ways in which the ideas and debates around issues of concern to the former French colonies and to their relationship with France have evolved since the period of the anticolonial struggles and independence. A major part of the emphasis will be on the diasporic communities from the former colonies, now settled in France, as, in a sense, they have the position on the front line, where some of the key points of tension have flared up, including, notably, the ongoing series of affairs, mobilisation and legislation around the issue of the headscarf in France. In their turn, these have served to focus the debates that form the basis of this chapter. It will also look at those other areas of relevance to people living in territories that, while far-flung across the globe, still constitute part of France and thus remain effectively colonies, the DOM-TOM.

Both of these cases may be considered to come under the rubric of the postcolonial defined as a situation, ideology or discourse in which colonisation still has an ongoing effect and is a primary factor of significance to present-day conditions and debates, and the understanding of those realities and issues. In both cases, the issues raised revolve around the concept of 'otherness' or 'alterity', in a context in which this difference is denied but nonetheless used as a marker.

Alterity and Difference

We have seen how the Republican world view prioritises the unity of the nation, made up of a union of equal citizens. We have also seen how the notion of political equality, in which individual differences were confined to the domain of the private, came to be merged, during the course of the nineteenth century, with a conception of cultural sameness, which brought elements that had been restricted to the private domain into the public, political sphere. The consequence of this process of fusion of unity with identity in the French discourse has been to squeeze the notion of

difference out of the Republican discourse altogether and thus allow it no place in any legitimising discourse of the political status quo.

Yet the elimination of difference in ideological terms did not mean its elimination in reality. Both within the nation and without, difference remained a key category and, if it could not be articulated within the Republican discourse, it nonetheless found its expression elsewhere.

Pre-Revolutionary thinking had clearly prioritised the notion of difference in its hierarchical construct of feudalism and its embryonic view of what differentiated France and the French from other political entities. Remnants of this world view were to persist well into the modern period. Furthermore, the nineteenth century was to see the development of ideas that had their roots in the *Ancien Régime*, but which assumed new forms with the aid of pseudo-scientific credentials, culminating in more or less sophisticated ideological systems founded on the notions of national or racial superiority. It was also to see the emergence of new currents of thought challenging the dominant ideology of formal political equality, through the emergence of Marxism and other political theories stressing the difference and indeed the radical oppositions of class. Indeed, Marxism represents the founding of an entire theoretical system on the dialectical principle of contradiction. In time, this was to lead to the incorporation of difference as a positive constituent of other counter-discourses, such as anticolonialism and anti-racism, as well as the subsequent positive theorisation of gender difference in feminism.

In the French context, however, the Republican discourse emerged triumphant at the end of the nineteenth century after a long and bitter struggle against the forces of anti-Republicanism, which were to continue to pose a serious, if intermittent, threat to the Republic well into the twentieth century. No doubt the need to do battle for the Republic had contributed to its radical pre-eminence and the lesser purchase of more radical ideologies, such as Marxism, which were only to become a serious force in France at a much later period.

Given that the political theory of Republicanism did not allow the space within which to accommodate difference, where did the very real differences that characterised the relation of France to its colonial others find their expression? If it could not be within the domain of political theory, these differences were nonetheless articulated, but primarily in the domains of art, anthropology and religion and mainly through the element of the visual.

Thus the whole artistic, literary and intellectual production that goes under the heading of orientalism (Said 1978) came into being, forming a counterbalancing weight to the undifferentiating discourse of Republicanism, or, to use another metaphor, the other side of the Republican coin. The foundation of orientalism was the basic distinction between us – the European, the Westerner – and them – the non-European, the oriental. In this relation between European and non-European, it is the European who was the subject and the non-European the object: subject and object of knowledge; subject and object of power; subject and object of judgement; subject and object of representation. Underlying all these possible relations was the primordial relation of the subject and object of the gaze (see Chapter 4).

Orientalism was, of course, just one form of the relation to the non-European Other, which could range from extremes of sophistication and intellectual credibility, sometimes linked with real positive contributions to knowledge and culture, to the dregs of a straightforward crude racism. It was, however, the one that allowed the greatest flourishing to the articulation of the gaze.

All forms of the relation were defined by the fundamental inequality between the subject and object. In all cases, the subject was deemed to be the holder of some superior knowledge, power, insight or representational capacity. The European studied the native, educated him, ruled him, judged him and depicted him or her. Imperialism did not countenance the reverse procedure, where the European could be made the object to the native subject.

What is more, the inequality of the relation was reinforced through its definition as an absolute opposition. The native Other was not just any other; the Other was viewed as diametrically opposite to the Western subject. In this relation, all the positive qualities were embodied in the subject, all the negative ones in the object. Yet, for this relation to fulfil its function in bolstering the superiority of the Westerner, there also needed to be a mutual dependency; the Westerner could not exist without his Other. One way through which this was expressed was the process of self-definition of the West itself, which situated its identity, at least partially, in its negative definition vis-à-vis its native Other. A Westerner was defined as a non-native, an anti-native, i.e. negatively according to what he/she was not, rather than what he/she was. W.B. Yeats, for instance, was haunted by Leo the African, whom he saw as his anti-self (see also Maalouf 1986). In addition to articulating European superiority, this problematic has also been used to explain the decadence and decline of Europe, when, instead of asserting its rejection of the anti-self, the West acts as a mirror for all that comes from the East, as in Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (Spengler (1918)/1922), which was so influential upon André Malraux and his version of the same problematic in *The Temptation of the West* (Malraux 1926).

In broad terms, it is possible to trace three major historical approaches to the conceptualisation of the Other.

The first, typical of the orientalist world view, arises from an ethnic, racial or gender-based notion, based on the exclusion of the Other from a common grouping and linked to a particularist world view. We shall see that one of the most serious disadvantages of this view of the Other is its vulnerability to the contingencies of relativism. Ultimately its special pleading for particular favours or special treatment can rebound against those who propound it and today's Other may turn the tables tomorrow to exclude the excluder in his turn. It is dependent on other means outside ideology to reinforce the superiority or dominance of the one over the Other.

The second broad type of conceptualisation of the Other is linked to a universalist world view. As such, it avoids the relativism of the first broadly defined approach. However, it leads to two different conceptual dilemmas, in which, on the one hand, alienation becomes inescapable for the individual, who can only escape abstraction by defining him/herself in relation to the gaze of the Other, according to

some, or as part of a social process, in which economic, social, political and cultural realities also have a key role in constituting self-identity.

On the other hand, there is the constant temptation to subvert the universalist discourse through the back door, as it were. In its typical French form, this is what happens when language and its associated culture come into play as primary determinants, as markers of difference of the Other. The universalist discourse was, in fact, even more fundamentally flawed, not least because the universal was defined in terms that took the European male as the universal norm. As such, the non-European and the female were inevitably defined in a negative relation to this norm.

The third type of approach attempts to define the Other in terms of economic position, the only Other that fundamentally matters being the class Other (Balibar & Wallerstein 1988). This approach is typical of the Marxist class analysis of differential economic relations of production and the fundamental contradiction between capital and labour. An essential element of this relation is its dynamic. The opposites are intimately bound together in a reciprocal relation, characterised by Marx and others as a unity of opposites. Neither side can exist without the other. Yet the contradiction, which is the fundamental part of the relation, is the force that will tear it apart and allow a new relation to emerge. In this definition, Marxism represents a theoretical critique of Republicanism (in its French form) from a left-wing perspective. However, in practice, French Marxism has taken pains to ground itself in Republicanism. The reasons for this are mainly historical and have much to do with the ongoing battles for the Republic in nineteenth- and twentieth-century France, polarising the nation into pro- or anti-Republican camps.

Of these different approaches, it was the second that was pressed into service to determine the official line on how immigrants settling in France were to be treated. It was assumed that the French way was universally valid, that all newcomers could be, and should be, assimilated into French society. Just as for all other French citizens, there were a number of institutions that had as their mission the manufacturing of this so-called universal, homogeneous citizen, notably the education system and compulsory military service. From the end of the nineteenth century, these had mostly managed to achieve their objective of assimilating new settlers in France (largely immigrants and refugees from other European countries) and turning them into French men and women over the course of two generations (Noiriel 1988; Hargreaves 1995; Tribalat 1996; MacMaster 1997).

When migrants from the colonies began to settle in metropolitan France, starting with demobbed soldiers from both world wars, followed by workers to fill the need for labour after the Second World War, they were first seen as temporary manpower. However, once family regroupment began to take place and more or less permanent settlement became the norm, the issue of how to deal with this phenomenon became highly politicised (Wihtol de Wenden 1988).

Officially, the policy remained what it had been for previous immigrant groups – assimilation into French society. However, the politicisation of the issue of immigration, particularly from the Maghreb countries and particularly from Algeria, resulted in a greater degree of ambivalence than had been the case for the Italians or

the Poles, for instance. Moreover, with the oil crisis of 1973 and the subsequent difficulties for the French economy, the need for manpower to meet the labour shortage was drastically reduced and the more or less open-door policy for migrants put into sharp reverse. From then on, the debate raged on a number of fronts, with the rise of the extreme-right National Front premised on the exploitation of the political capital arising from immigration. A variety of pseudo-scientific theories were bandied about, such as the famous *seuil de tolérance* (tolerance threshold), positing a proportion of immigrants in society that could not be exceeded without straining the capacity of the French society to accommodate them (Silverman 1992). Needless to say, the figure was inevitably an arbitrary one.

The question of whether it was possible to integrate the non-European immigrants at all was increasingly posed, with endless variations on the theme of how this assimilation, integration or, simply, insertion, could be achieved. Very often, these debates were solely about how best to describe this process; the terms in which they were conducted were essentially limited to terminological wrangling.

One thing, however, was not a cause for disagreement. At the fundamental level, these debates and political scaremongering were about people who were perceived as Others. At the same time, their difference was not allowed to be officially acknowledged. Even the collection of statistical material based upon ethnic or religious categories was not permitted. This led to a bizarre set of contradictions that still inform controversies and conflicts today (Beaud and Noiriel 2004).

Not least among these contradictions was that between the opposition to the recognition of differences on the internal, national plane, i.e. within France itself, and the growing tendency of France to take the leadership on the external, international plane, within the francophone world and elsewhere, for a policy based on the defence of diversity (see Chapter 7).

Within France, the debate became polarised during the course of the 1980s and early 1990s between those who continued to argue for the assimilationist policy and the safeguard of the indivisible Republic, on the one hand, and those who championed *'le droit à la différence'* – the right to difference. This was an argument that split the French Left down the middle. For the supporters of the extreme Right, things were presented in a more clear-cut manner, in which ethnicity came to the fore. The Other was defined by two factors: skin colour and religion. Bruno Mégret, for instance, of the Front National, had two criteria to define 'Frenchness': the first was whiteness; the second was Christianity or even Catholicism (Taguieff 1997).

Supporters of assimilation on the Left, however, opposing the right to difference, argued that the recognition of difference would amount to discrimination (of both the negative and positive kinds) and undermine the equality of citizenship. This argument did not deal with the actual discrimination and inequality that existed in fact and which was lived, not as a right, but as a burden.

On the other hand, amongst supporters of the right to difference on the Left were many who saw this as the natural culmination of a real policy of equality, for which the effective recognition of the right to difference (national, cultural, religious, etc.) was a necessary but not sufficient condition. It was clear that the abstract,

universal citizen was not found in reality as a complete human individual. Indeed, Etienne Balibar went so far as to say that this notion of an abstract universal being, without differentiating qualities was more appropriate to the non-citizen, rather than to the citizen. In 1992, he posed the following question:

> Is a political community based solely on the equality of its members possible, if by equality is meant the setting aside of all 'differences' that characterise individuals and connect them to a particular group of people and if the basis of this equality is the universality of 'human rights' alone? In other terms, can the citizen be an indeterminate person, a person 'with no characteristics or qualities'? This is a definition that seems rather to apply to the non-citizen (for instance, the proletarian). (Balibar 1992: 113–14)

Balibar thus proposed doing away with the *homme/citoyen* (person/citizen) dichotomy in favour of a notion of citizenship that would take on board the full gamut of real difference – 'a citizenship, *overdetermined* by anthropological difference' (Balibar 1992: 145).

In this interpretation, the 'right to difference' is viewed as an end in itself, a defining category of the political value system. Other interpretations saw this supposed right as a 'means', a tool in the furtherance of a broader objective. As such, it was a right that could simply be asserted in the line of a programme of action, or else made the substance of a demand. One of the significant actions in this respect was the so-called *Marche des Beurs*, the actual title of which was the March for Equality and Against Racism (Bouamama 1994). On the one hand, this action could be, and was, seen as a dramatic assertion of the right to difference. In the autumn of 1983, young people, mainly descendants of families of North African origin from the Lyons area, carried out a three-month-long march of protest, starting out from Marseilles and arriving in Paris on 3 December. The march was a recognition of the need for specific action on the part of the victims of discrimination and racism whose problems and concerns were not dealt with (or not dealt with adequately) by other organisations. At the same time, the overriding aim of the protest was to achieve equality of treatment and eliminate the differential treatment of the 'Beurs'.

The organisations that developed as a result of this type of action, such as SOS-Racisme in 1984 (Désir 1985) or France-Plus in 1985 (Wihtol de Wenden and Leveau 2001), were often portrayed as typical of the two contradictory positions in the debate. Yet these differences have been greatly exaggerated and the complexities of the issues involved masked by their deceptive representation in terms of an oversimplified polarisation.

The French Way Versus 'Anglo-Saxon' Communitarianism

It has often been the case that the defence of the French Republican integrationist model has been conducted in terms of a threat from 'Anglo-Saxon communitarianism', a danger to which the supporters of the 'right to difference' are considered vulnerable.

It is hard to see what the 'Anglo-Saxon communitarian model' really represents in French discourse, apart from an ideological construct. After all, in no real sense do so-called ethnic minorities have any formalised rights in either the USA or Great Britain. There is no such category of ethnic minority or national minority in constitutional terms, with the arguable exception of the arrangements relative to power-sharing in Northern Ireland, although this is determined by the political parties' share of the vote rather than by the category of religious communities. The most that can be said is that there is a recognition of the specific characteristics of the situation of certain minority groups and that there have been some limited efforts to alleviate some of the effects of the discrimination from which they suffer. While these efforts have been almost entirely focused on achieving equality of treatment, for instance, through anti-discriminatory legislation, there has also been an extremely limited use of positive discrimination or positive action programmes in both countries, though always highly contested, in pursuit of the same goal, i.e. equality, not privilege. There has certainly been nothing like the quota system, institutionalised in India, for example, through which places in the civil service or higher education are reserved for the so-called scheduled castes, previously known as 'untouchables'. The only area where quotas have played a significant role has been in the area of immigration policy, where the rationale was not one of positive discrimination, but more the management of restricted access. Moreover, it has to be said that any acknowledgement of the specific problems faced by the unofficial ethnic minority groups and any measures to alleviate the problems caused by racist discrimination have only been obtained after significant battles and mobilisation on the part of the groups concerned.

In France, the few isolated instances of 'positive discrimination', notably the appointment in January 2004 of Aïssa Dermouche as Prefect, indeed, as a 'Muslim Prefect', to use the words of the then Home Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, have remained just that, isolated instances and not the outcome of any real policy. Nicolas Sarkozy, one of the few politicians to favour the use of positive discrimination was rapped on the knuckles by the Haut Conseil à l'Intégration in its annual report for 2003 (*Libération*, 26 January 2004). Again, there were those who claimed it was merely a matter of semantics. Indeed, one might argue that one of the few real instances of positive discrimination to be instituted has concerned, not any 'postcolonial' minority, but the island population of Corsica, with the agreement between the public shipping company SNCM (Société Nationale Maritime Corse Méditerranée) and the Corsican trade union, STC (Syndicat des Travailleurs Corses), to give preference to Corsicans when hiring new workers. Although not overtly portrayed as positive discrimination, this *'préférence insulaire'* has also been highly contested in the name of 'Republican values' by French trade unions opposed to 'communitarianism' (*Libération*, 21 September 2004), and debates and actions around this issue continue to take place.

At the same time, there have been clear signs of some change in approach in France, or at least an awareness that something needs to be done. In 2002, at a meeting of the Haut Conseil à l'Intégration, the then Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre

Raffarin, spoke of a France that 'holds hybridity (*métissage*) dear to its heart' (*Le Monde*, 25 October 2002). The use of the term 'positive discrimination' has so far been anathema to most members of the political establishment, with President Chirac insisting that it was not *convenable* as a method of bringing about integration (*Libération*, 5 October 2004). Yet the establishment in 2004 of a Haute Autorité de lutte contre les discriminations et pour l'égalité, following the report of the Stasi Commission on *laïcité*, published in December 2003, appeared to have taken something of a step in this direction, though, as we shall see, this was not the main outcome of the report. In what seems to be a belated attempt to address the problem with a body along the lines of the British Commission for Racial Equality, established in 1976 as a result of the amalgamation of the Race Relations Board, set up in 1965, with the Community Relations Commission, the Haute Autorité appears to have the mission, not just of taking up instances of discrimination and acting against them, but also taking positive initiatives and making recommendations to prevent and eradicate discrimination. Whether or not these amount to 'positive discrimination' appears to depend on whether the quantitative concept of 'quotas' comes into the frame, which, as we have seen in Chapter 1, caused such trouble in the case of the 'parity' of political representation for women. Proposals for action framed in more qualitative and thus, arguably, more vague terms were far more acceptable. Thus, in the course of 2004, we saw the then Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, using the term *'mobilisation positive'*, the head of the Haut conseil à l'intégration, Blandine Kriegel, talking of a *'politique positive'*, others using the expression *'mesures correctives'* and Sarkozy himself resorting to *'volontarisme républicain'* to avoid the dreaded term 'positive discrimination' (*Libération*, 5 October 2004).

The same arguments surfaced as in the debate on parity between the sexes. On the one hand, those in favour of parity had argued that political representative bodies should accurately reflect the composition of the nation. Their opponents had recourse to the standard response that the universal French Republic was constituted by non-differentiated citizens. Yet again, the influence of the Anglo-Saxon example was deemed pernicious.

In point of fact, there is very little basis in reality for the linking together of Britain and the USA on this issue, although the use of the terminology 'Anglo-Saxon' implies that the one model applies in both cases. In fact, issues relating to race are grounded in a very different history and politics in the two countries and this has impinged to a very great extent on the way in which they are played out at the present time.

Indeed, there is much more in common between France and Britain in terms of their colonial history, the nature, scale and timing of the immigration from their former colonies and the economic, social and political scenarios that have arisen as a result. Any analysis of the situation on the ground will show that the situation of groups or individuals of non-European origin, whether in France or in Britain, highlights far more similarities than differences in their situation, in terms of employment situations, patterns of housing, racial discrimination and harassment,

both individual and institutionalised, and the existence of an extreme right-wing politics feeding on issues of race. Moreover, those differences that have existed between the two countries as a result of certain historical factors relating to different experiences of colonisation and decolonisation, as well as questions concerning nationality and citizenship status, have either diminished or are in the process of disappearing with the passing of time and the renewal of the generations. For instance, the exclusion of non-French nationals from voting rights meant the disenfranchisement of foreign residents from involvement in mainstream political life in the 1960s and 1970s in a way that was not the case in Britain, where immigrants coming from Commonwealth countries (and Ireland) had been able to vote from the time of their arrival and residence in Britain.

In spite of their involvement in mainstream British politics, or even in a large measure because of it, immigrants to Britain from the former colonies soon became aware that they needed to develop their own political means of expression and organisation to address the issues of specific concern to themselves. It is no doubt because of this autonomous mobilisation that they were able to make some degree of progress, which in fact put them ahead of their counterparts in France. It appeared at the time and well into the 1990s that there was a time lag and that France would in fact follow the British example in due course. This has appeared to be the case, in terms of the acceptance of a certain level of 'multiculturalism'. In the media, for instance, black faces have long been confined to minor, secondary roles in France (Neath 2004). It is only recently, following the report of the CSA (Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisul) published in 2000 on the extremely low level of representation of 'visible minorities' on French television and action subsequently taken by Catherine Tasca, as Minister of Culture and Communication, in response to this report, that a recognition of the need to 'reflect the diversity of French society' has been incorporated into the policy documents of the audio-visual channels. It was only at the beginning of 2004 that Marc Tessier, president of France Télévisions, appointed a 'Monsieur Intégration' and launched a series of initiatives designed, as he said at the time, 'to encourage the development of talented people, able, for instance, to present the main news bulletin' (*Libération*, 5 October 2004). Sébastien Folin became the first black weatherman on TF1 in 2002, showing perhaps how things had moved on since the mid-1980s, when Rachid Arab only lasted two weeks as a news presenter at the time (www.Afrik.com 13 February 2002). Given that Trevor McDonald has presented the mainstream news in Britain since the mid-1970s and Moira Stewart since 1981, and many other black journalists have followed in their footsteps since, the hypothesis of a time lag appears to be borne out, at least as far as the audio-visual media are concerned.

It is, however, becoming increasingly apparent that there is far more than an historical time lag involved here. Events over the last decade have shown that France is not necessarily going to follow the same path. The original headscarf affair and its sequels have been enlightening in this respect. When the affair first broke in October 1989, with the exclusion of three girls from their school in Creil in the Paris suburbs for wearing what was described as an Islamic headscarf (*hijab*) or, more emotively

and quite inaccurately, a 'veil', it seemed that this was an incident of the same type as those that had occurred in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s, when there were a number of conflicts involving school uniform issues, such as the wearing of trousers to school by Muslim girls, or around the ban on Sikh bus conductors wearing their turbans instead of the uniform cap, for instance in Manchester in 1967 and Wolverhampton in 1969 (*BBC News*, 9 April 1969, www.bbc.co.uk). There were also campaigns for the right to wear turbans in the fire and police service, as well as in lieu of motorcycle helmets (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/318934.stm). At the time, these disputes, controversial though they proved, had been resolved through compromises of one kind or another, mainly at the local level. The issues had been defused without blowing up into serious national political issues.

In France, however, the issue did not go away but evolved into a multi-faceted crisis at the national level, which has rumbled on, with intermittent explosions, since 1989 (Silverman 1992; Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995). The headscarf has become the symbol of a challenge to *laïcité*, the particularly French version of secularism, in its bastion, the public school system. On the surface, the impassioned debates around the issue have been about drawing demarcation lines between religion and the public education system (as the agent of the secular state), between the public and the private, personal spheres. For some, it has simply been a clear-cut case of the defence of French Republicanism and all that it stands for. Many who consider themselves progressives and of the Left have seen the ban on the wearing of headscarves as a step to defend the rights of women against what they see as an unwelcome religious tyranny, which, far more than a simple dress code, entails the subordination and oppression of women. Unlike comparable issues in Britain twenty or thirty years ago, the issue has not simply been to make the Other conform, although there is no doubt that this gut suspicion and fear of the Other, which constitutes a major element of most racist attitudes, has also been an important underlying factor. As in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s, health and safety issues have also been invoked. The distinctiveness of the issue in France, however, is based on its association, in ideological terms, with universal Republicanism, secularism and the rights of women. The first schoolgirls were excluded because the head teacher of their school claimed that the wearing of the headscarf constituted a form of religious proselytism, which violated the school Republican space, as one from which religion was supposedly excluded. As a number of people have pointed out, this neutrality had never been absolute. The school calendar has traditionally been arranged around the Christian religious calendar. There has always been some element of compromise on the issue of secularism, not with religion in general, but with the Catholic Church in particular. From the beginning, one day per week was set aside to allow schoolchildren to have religious instruction in the catechism. Moreover, Catholic religious personnel have been allowed access to school premises.

An early attempt to defuse the affair was made by the then Socialist Education Minister, Lionel Jospin, who overruled the initial expulsions and referred the matter to the Council of State, which endorsed his position in their ruling of 27 November 1989 that the headscarf was not, in itself, an ostentatious religious symbol (Barkat

2004). However, with the return of the Right to government, the Bayrou Circular, which the Minister of Education, François Bayrou, put out in 1994, formalised a ban on all ostentatious signs of religious belief, but made it clear that it was not directed against Christian and Jewish symbols. This gave a licence to school heads to indulge in a further wave of expulsions, though many of these were subsequently overturned. This was not, however, a case of Left versus Right, or even of different strategies to cope with the rise of the extreme Right National Front, although this certainly played a part in keeping the issue on the boil.

In effect, a cloud of ambiguity shrouded the issue for the next ten years, with the various parties in the disputes pushing to test the boundaries of their position, in an ongoing, simmering stand-off. It was partly in the name of putting an end to the ambiguity and confusion that the new law was enacted. It was not, however, the result of compromise and discussion, but rather a reassertion of the primacy of 'French' Republican values. It was imposed, not negotiated. It was also the recognition, though not the acceptance, of the fact that the policy of assimilation had not worked. The whole debate around the law has been couched or cloaked in ideology. Fundamentally, it was an attempt to put a line under the issue by demonstrating who was in charge and that challenges and resistance would not be tolerated. It was an effort to settle the issue once and for all.

The process was set in motion, with the creation of a committee in June 2003, chaired by Bernard Stasi, which reported at the end of the year (Gemie 2004). Jacques Chirac greeted the publication of the report with a major televised speech on 17 December 2003 on the subject of *'laïcité'*, in which he asked the legislature to pass a law banning the wearing of 'ostentatious' signs of religious identity, singling out what he called the *'voile islamique'*, as well as the Jewish *Kippa* or a 'cross of manifestly excessive dimensions'. As the main outcome of the Stasi Commission, the 2004 law, enforcing *laïcité* in public schools from the beginning of the 2004–5 school year, was, in effect, particularly focused in both its inspiration and its application on the wearing of the *hijab*, or Islamic headscarf, by Muslim girls. This was demonstrated quite clearly by a documentary film, *The Headmaster and the Headscarves*, made by Infocus Productions and screened on BBC2 on 29 March 2005, when it showed that only Muslim girls were targeted for inspection at the school gates.

What was actually at stake was not secularism per se, but the issue of difference and the use of religious ideology and symbolism as a tool of resistance. Although the events of 11 September 2001 and its aftermath had significantly increased the tensions surrounding this issue, related to the fear of Islamic terrorism and measures taken to combat it, it would be short-sighted not to see that the roots of these tensions go back much further in time in the case of France. They have to be unearthed in the precise forms of the Algerian liberation struggle and the role that Algerian women played in that conflict, when the issue of the veil became highly politicised. On the one hand, the French pursued a policy of trying to win over Algerian women on issues concerned with women's rights and attempted an educational and propaganda onslaught to persuade women not to wear the veil, including the use of force when more gentle tactics did not succeed, though a

significant number of Algerian women were in fact recruited to perform social, educational, health and military work on behalf of the French (Seferdjeli 2004). At the same time, many Algerian women took to wearing the veil as a sign of their resistance to French occupation (Fanon (1959)/1970). There was also a practical element to this: the veil was sometimes used to conceal the transportation of arms and bombs and sometimes the *moudjahidate* would dress in European style to merge unveiled in the European quarters.

This is an illustration of the enduring power of representations and notions that have come into being in an earlier epoch to resurface at a later stage. Although perceptions of the 'Others' of imperialism may take on new forms in changed historical circumstances, there remain significant strata of accretions that consciously or subconsciously impinge on the way they are represented and handled. The imagery and rhetoric of the crusades, as well as the ideological paraphernalia associated with slavery, are profoundly embedded in the European psyche and there is no doubt of their influence on later forms of oppression and the way it is articulated. In addition to these key ideological vestiges and imprints on the modern European mind, there are also those that are peculiar to the specifically French trauma of the Algerian War, which can still have such an influence on modern-day manifestations of racism.

A re-examination of the French rejection of the 'Anglo-Saxon model' may also throw some light on these issues. For, although it is true that race issues in Britain and the USA are characterised by considerable differences, there is nonetheless one aspect in which developments in the US have been enormously influential on black people in Britain. This was the development of the struggle for civil rights and then black power and the forms this took in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, there is a strong case for arguing that, when France dug in its heels against the 'Anglo-Saxon model' it was not because it wanted to avoid the establishment of 'ghettos' on the outskirts of French cities. These existed anyway. It was because it wanted to stamp out the possibility of resistance developing on the same scale as in the US and Britain. That this was not about to happen would be graphically illustrated by the serious riots in the *banlieues* that came to a head in November 2005.

We shall return to these events shortly. However, there is another dimension to the headscarf affair(s) that has not been sufficiently explored so far. This is the association with the problematic of vision and visibility that underpins much, if not most, of the dominant French approach to the Other, and the way in which the Other tends to be represented in the symbolic imaginary universe.

The Visibility of Difference

The importance of vision and the gaze in defining the status of the Other has already been touched upon in Chapter 4. It is a key component of the orientalist problematic, as of more general relations involving a powerful, determining subject (individual or collective) and a powerless, subordinate object (again individual or collective). Indeed, one might see the ultimate 'voyeur' in conceptions of God as all-seeing, but invisible.

In present-day France, its most everyday manifestation as far as the diasporic communities are concerned is the basic definition of immigrants and their descendants from the former colonies as the 'visible' minorities. It is because they look different that they are marked out. Their different bodily appearance is what defines them in popular discourse, their skin colour, the shape of their facial features, the characteristics of their hair. Other features are also added, such as the type of clothing worn. Even such things as smells and noisy behaviour become linked in the popular imagination to these Others, as picked up for populist effect by Jacques Chirac in his now notorious comments on 'le bruit' and 'l'odeur', amongst other derogatory references to immigrants in a party meeting at Orléans on 19 June 1991 (*Le Monde*, 21 June 1991). However, it is noticeable that the visual and indeed bodily characteristics predominate in the way the Other is defined.[1] Fanon has analysed in depth the importance of the body in the constitution and definition of the black man, which he sees as fraught with difficulty and negativity.[2] Moreover, it is often assumed that these Others are themselves responsible for their visibility, that they deliberately 'flaunt their differences' (Bancel and Blanchard 1997: 29).

Visibility and vision can assume many different guises. In its most extreme form, that of surveillance, vision is used as a deliberate controlling strategy, as notably proposed by Jeremy Bentham in his design of the 'all-seeing' Panopticon for the institutional control not just of prisoners but also workers, hospital patients, school students and so on, allowing the observer to observe and control without being seen (Bentham (1787)/1995). As Michel Foucault pointed out in *Surveiller et punir* (Foucault 1975), drawing out the implications of 'Panopticism', it was the visibility itself and the inmate's awareness of it that was the essential factor in the control. The system is designed in such a way that the inmate may be seen at all times, yet the inspector viewing him/her cannot be seen. Moreover, it is an essential part of this system that the inspector does not have to constantly view the inmate. The important thing is that the inmate never knows whether (s)he is actually been viewed at any particular moment and yet is always aware that (s)he might be. This becomes what Foucault has called the 'automatic functioning of power', where the effects of the surveillance are ongoing even where it is actually only carried out intermittently. It is thus the creation and sustaining of the power relation that matters, not the actual exercise of power by any particular individual.

Applied to the imperial power relation, surveillance has been defined thus: 'Surveillance – One of the most powerful strategies of imperial dominance is that of surveillance, or observation, because it implies a viewer with an elevated vantage point, it suggests the power to process and understand that which is seen, and it objectifies and interpellates the colonized subject in a way that fixes its identity in relation to the surveyor' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1995a: 227). It is not necessary for the viewing to be continuous. It is the overarching condition in which the viewing is always possible but never reciprocal that frames the relation.

While this is certainly helpful as a general outline of a problematic, it does, however, need to be refined in a number of important ways. First, there are situations and practices in which the viewing is quite overt and may indeed be ostentatious, as

in the case of orientalist art and its more modern variants. Secondly, the viewed object does not always exist in passivity, but may engage in his or her own action to subvert the gaze and transform it. Finally, implicated in the voyeurism may not just be patterns of surveillance for purposes of control but also the complex processes associated with desire.

The Image of Difference

While the Republican universalist discourse allows no space for difference, it comes into its own in the representations of various art forms and media, as well as in the iconography of religion, whether these representations take on the form of idealised exotica or the more humdrum negative stereotypes depicted in the media of everyday life, where criminality and violence are the themes of predilection (Beaud and Noiriel 2004). Central to the depiction of difference is its attachment to the body. The characteristic dualism that continues to haunt French ways of thinking and representation situates difference in the corporeal, the fleshly, as opposed to the abstract rationality of the universalist domain of the things of the mind. It is not surprising that the key image of orientalist art is not just the exotic Other, but the oriental female Other – the woman in the harem.[3] These are images in which the body is highlighted as the key element in the composition. Moreover, these are rarely nudes; the depiction of bodies as masked or veiled, only the better to reveal, by suggestion, the flesh beneath, is a crucial part of this imagery. Its resilience today is shown by modern variants on the theme – in photography, fashion, television and cinema. This is a theme that Leila Sebbar has developed in many of her novels, particularly *Shérazade* (Sebbar 1982).

There is a sense in which the images of schoolgirls clad in the headscarf fall within this same tradition and indeed it is significant that it is the girls who have been singled out as the symbols of difference. However, the effect generally produced is not of the oriental woman. The titillating effect of the oriental image of the veiled woman is absent from these portrayals. This is not the land of exotica, this is the public school system, custodian of the values of the French Republic, where such blatant images of difference have no place. There has been a perceived overstepping of the mark, of the boundaries between the private religious sphere, on the one hand, and the world of the secular ideal, where the Word holds sway, on the other.

This may be the perception; the reality is more complex. For the Word has been brought into service, to demarcate these individuals as different, and doubly different because of their origins from amongst the formerly colonised (whether defined as national, racial, ethnic or simply historical difference) and because of their gender. This is a vivid illustration of the concept of the *'corps d'exception'* – the definition of a group of people by their 'difference' and their exclusion from the possibility of assuming their subjectivity as citizens (Barkat 1999). Their difference is situated at the most basic bodily level. Yet the women concerned are condemned, not for their clothing, their masking of their bodies, but for their assertion, their appropriation, of their difference, their defiance and their resistance to the dominant power that claims hegemony over them.

However, there is more to this than the dialectic between the viewer and the viewed and the subversion of the gaze, which has been discussed in Chapter 4. It is now time to bring in another element, just as important to the business of vision. This is the image. The image and the gaze do not exist in a static relation; there is a dynamic of reciprocity between the two. As Régis Debray has pointed out:

> there is not, on the one hand, the image, a unique, inert, stable material, and, on the other hand, the gaze, coming like a mobile sunray to light up the page of an open book. To gaze is not to receive but to order the visible, to organise experience. The image draws its meaning from the gaze, as does writing from reading, and this meaning is not speculative but practical. (Debray 1992: 40–41)

This is not just to account for the effect produced by the gaze. Debray has also explored the active effect of the image. In former times, the image was considered to produce real effects on the viewer and this is still the case today, particularly with regard to pornography and television, as well as being a characteristic feature of certain types of religious or political fanaticism. In such cases, the active effectiveness of certain images is enhanced when these images are viewed not by individuals alone, but through the collective gaze – the *'oeil collectif'* – which is also described as the shared subconscious – the *'inconscient partagé'*. This collective visual representation of the world is subject to modifications in forms, codes and representational techniques at different moments in history. It is also characteristic of a way of relating to the world that does not involve thought as such. As Debray puts it: 'the invisible codes of the visible, which define with extreme naivety and for each age a certain state of the world, or, in other words, a culture. Or how the vision that the world presents of itself to those who look without thinking (Debray 1992: 11).

In this view, then, relating to the world in visual terms is linked to the notion of naivety; it is characteristic of non-reflective thinking or, using a more evolutionary, hierarchical frame, of pre-reflective or pre-conceptual thought. This is akin to Althusser's view of the visual as the characteristic mode of ideology, rather than of knowledge per se (Althusser 1965). As such, visual perception is sometimes seen as second-rate, on a lower level than rational thinking.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the visual really comes into its own in the religious sphere, particularly with the importance of iconography in Christian Catholicism. In Protestantism, on the other hand, there was a significant opposition to visual imagery in religion and the church. Indeed, the degree of hostility to iconography and idolatry was in direct proportion to the radicality of the critique of the established church, particularly in its Puritan, Quaker and Nonconformist strands. Given this hostility to imagery in much of Protestant theology and the fact that Protantism triumphed over Catholicism in Britain and thence to much of the English-speaking world, it is not inconceivable that it may have had a part to play in the different relations that operate in respect of the visual and the gaze and their associated metaphors in the anglophone and francophone discourses.

However, although Debray has some interesting things to say in respect of the visual relation and the image, his positing of a clear divide between the Puritan preachers of the Word in the north and the Mediterranean devotees of the image in the south rather neglects the cleavages and different world views that have existed within each of these societies. In particular, it fails to give due importance to the fundamental contradiction that exists in the French collective between, on the one hand, the Word of the Republic, with its abstract egalitarian universalism and, on the other, the visual problematic that dominates the representation of relations with the Other within.[4]

Leaving theological questions aside, the so-called headscarf affairs and the responses of the French state are only incidentally about the enforcement of secularism within the public education system and far more to do with the way in which the Other is defined in France and the response that this provokes. The wearing of a headscarf as a sign of revolt, whether or not it implies the acceptance of the religious and political ideology associated with it, may be seen as an inadequate response to the inequalities and inequities faced by those concerned, on a number of grounds. However, the counter-response by the French state and associated institutions represented a far more serious danger. Not only did it fail to address the real problems at stake here, but it also reinforced the very problematic that is at the heart of the cause of the problem.

It is against this background that one has to set the riots of November 2005, which began in Clichy-sous-Bois, quickly spread throughout the *banlieues* of the major French cities and ultimately exposed the threadbare nature of the French Republican universalist ideology in its relation to the postcolonial diaspora living in France. Whilst the particular spark was given by the electrocution of two young men in an electricity substation, where they had taken refuge from the police, the root causes were the long-standing discrimination and harassment experienced by young people in the *banlieues* on a daily basis. The tensions had come to a head following a spate of measures directed against this sector of the population and singling them out in what could be interpreted as a series of provocations. Not only did the law banning the wearing of the headscarf in schools appear to be deliberately targeting Muslim girls; the subsequent law of 23 February 2005, making the questioning of the positive nature of colonialism an offence, added to the humiliation of the postcolonial diasporic communities (see Chapter 8). The most important fuel for the forthcoming conflagration was, however, undoubtedly provided by Nicolas Sarkozy, who had once again been reinstated as Interior Minister. Not only did he institute the intensification of a policy of police repression and deportation of illegal residents to meet his unrealistically high fixed targets (including numbers of young people who had never lived anywhere but France but who found themselves technically without the correct papers), but he also deployed what seemed to be deliberately provocative language to single out in his pronouncements those he termed '*la racaille*', or scum, who needed to be power-cleansed out of the suburbs, or '*nettoyés au Karcher*'.

Indeed, it can be argued that it was Sarkozy himself who deliberately put an end to the fiction of universal equality. Moreover, some, such as Piotr Smolar (*Le Monde*,

15 November 2005), have argued that this is fully in line with his conception of France, which, unlike the traditional Republican emphasis on the unity and indivisibility of the nation, stresses instead the importance of individuals as the basic unit of society, with all their real and inevitable differences and conflicting interests. While Sarkozy presents this as a pragmatic realism, a view of France as it actually is rather than a utopian vision, there is also no doubt that it is in line with the type of free-enterprise economic and social model he favours for France within the context of the global economy.

The events of November 2005 have certainly exposed the real differences existing within France to the world at large. The existence of large communities living in what have effectively amounted to ghettos in the suburbs surrounding the large towns and cities points to a clear-cut divide between these people and the mainstream white population of France. The reality of their differentiation, whether this is expressed in terms of their appearance, racial characteristics, national origin or religion, can no longer be denied. Indeed, there has been no shortage of politicians and other public figures eager to attribute the problems faced by the suburban youth to their exotic difference. The permanent secretary of the Académie française and expert on the Soviet Union, Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, came up with what might have been considered the most outlandish explanation, blaming it all on what she claimed was the widespread practice of polygamy amongst African families in the Paris suburbs (*Libération*, 9 November 2005), if her 'analysis' had not also been taken up by such as Gérard Larcher, a Minister of Employment, as well as Bernard Accoyer, the president of the majority UMP group in the Assemblée nationale (*Le Monde*, 16 November 2005). Indeed, on 10 November, speaking on France 2, Nicolas Sarkozy himself had blamed the difficulties faced by the young people of the *banlieues* on polygamy, amongst other cultural practices (*Libération*, 17 November 2005).

The differentiation has also taken the form of spatial segregation, in which certain parts of France have been designated as 'off-limits' to certain sectors of the population. Just as the suburban ghettos have been described as *'zones de non-droit'*, so too are the *'beaux quartiers'* cordoned off from the inhabitants of the *banlieues*. These lines of demarcation reproduce in a postcolonial setting the former clear boundaries dividing the colonies and the colonised peoples from the metropolitan colonial power and the colonists, much in the same way as the colonial cities were divided into a European quarter and a 'native' quarter, whether it be the Arab kasbah, the black town or the slave quarters of the plantation.

While the riots can easily be understood as the almost inevitable outcome of many years of accumulated exasperation and resentment, a spontaneous combustion sparked by specific events that signified the final straw, it is also instructive to look at the form they took. While there were those who attempted to make the connection between the rioters and militant, political Islam (and the tear-gassing of the mosque in Clichy-sous-Bois has to be seen in this context), in point of fact, there was no religious content to the revolt. What is significant is that, in the absence of a clear political strategy, there was nonetheless an almost instinctual recourse to those actions that would give the highest visibility in the media to the rioters and their grievances.

Torching their own neighbourhoods may make little sense in the light of rational political objectives. However, the sight of flaming cars ablaze night after night on French TV screens provided a literally eye-catching statement that could no longer be ignored, focusing the attention of the media on those whose 'visibility' was itself part of the problem. The difference was that this time it was the young people themselves who were taking the initiative, for once determining how they were going to be seen.

It appears clear that a major rethink of the nature and scope of Republican universalism in France and its relation to the particular is on the cards. At the time of writing, there was lack of clear agreement by the state authorities on how to tackle the issues. The Prime Minister, Dominique de Villepin, was clinging to the traditional Republican view of the nation, while Sarkozy has proposed a variety of seemingly contradictory initiatives. His apparent belief in positive discrimination is tempered by the fact that it is only ever envisaged for a meritorious, privileged minority from within the ranks of the Others, thus reinforcing the outsider status of the majority. The only apparent area of consensus is on the need for the authority of the state to be reasserted and public order restored. The terms in which this has been done to date have been highly significant. The declaration of a state of emergency and the use of a law dating from 1955, originally framed to deal with public order issues arising from the Algerian War, to permit the declaration of localised curfews, would seem astonishingly politically inept if it were not designed to convey a precise message, in the strongest possible terms, as to who was in charge in France and who the 'outsiders' or 'Others' were.

The issues raised by the crisis of the secular Republican model are not, however, going to be easily put to rest. However, it is time now to move on to another category of 'Others within', some of whom have been described by Raphaël Confiant as living in a state of 'postcolonialism without independence'.

Postcolonialism without Independence: the DOM-TOM

The populations of the DOM-TOM (*Départements et territoires d'outre-mer*) represent the other major category of people who have a status of difference within the overall orbit of the French state (Aldrich & Connell 1992; Aldrich 1993). The DOM-TOM currently include the Overseas Departments of Martinique and Guadeloupe in the Caribbean, Guiana on the South American mainland, La Réunion in the Indian Ocean, along with a number of Overseas Territories, dotted around the Pacific, Indian and Antarctic Oceans, notably New Caledonia and French Polynesia, and two *collectivités territoriales*, Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, off the coast of Newfoundland, and Mayotte, in the Indian Ocean – what some have referred to as the 'confetti of empire'. Although some of the territories included here are counted amongst the oldest of the French colonies (*les vieilles colonies*), they have not, unlike most of the former French empire, achieved independence. The TOM enjoy a greater degree of autonomy, while remaining under the overarching French umbrella. New Caledonia, in particular, is on course for further transfer of power away from France.

Since 2003, there has been a change in the official terminology used to refer to the DOM-TOM. The DOM are now DROM (Département et région d'outre-mer) and the TOM are COM (Collectivité d'Outre-Mer), though within the last category, there is a further division between the Collectivité d'Outre-Mer départementale (Mayotte) and the Collectivité d'Outre-Mer territoriale (Saint Pierre-et-Miquelon). French Polynesia and New Caledonia are now both POM (Pays d'Outre-Mer), though Polynesia is a Collectivité d'Outre-Mer and New Caledonia a Collectivité Spécifique until 2014, when a local referendum is supposed to decide on the question of independence. In a further twist, all of the above are PTOM, or Pays et Territoires d'Outre-Mer, of the European Union (see http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/francophonie/dom-tom.htm).

The problems and issues of the DOM-TOM also vary, with the presence to a greater or lesser extent of a sizeable proportion in the population of European settlers and their descendants constituting a major political factor in some cases. Their strategic importance to France also varies. For many years, the use of the French Pacific territories for nuclear tests was a source of great controversy, culminating in the affair of the *Rainbow Warrior* in 1985. The protest ship was blown up by French secret service agents in New Zealand waters to prevent its sailing to the testing ground at Mururoa. The tests were later halted after much local and international outcry. The siting of space facilities in Guiana has been less controversial and has no doubt been beneficial to France's broader objectives of maintaining its prestige and status as a major world power.

However, it is the issues raised by the Caribbean island territories that are perhaps most relevant here, given that it was in the Caribbean that the first struggles against French colonialism were successfully waged and that there has been no lack of powerful advocates against colonialism in the years since. And yet Martinique, Guadeloupe and Guiana, like La Réunion in the Indian Ocean, remain attached to France, as integral parts of its territory. Why should this be so and can it be considered a successful application of the doctrine of assimilation?

The crucial step was the decision to opt for the *départementalisation* of 1946. In effect, this amounted to a choice to go down the path of 'equality' rather than 'independence'.

The willingness of France to maintain a presence in the Caribbean is characteristically linked to its perceived global interests and the importance of prestige on the international plane. Given the cost in terms of subsidies, there is no doubt that the priority is not any economic benefit, as in the earlier stages, when the sugar islands of the Caribbean contributed massively to the French economy. With the decline of the sugar industry and the problems faced by other sectors, which, in addition to the difficulties arising from the way in which the world trade system is organised, also face the extra problem of higher wage expectations than for other Caribbean producers as a result of the connection with France, the end result has been the development of heavily subsidised economies and societies in the Caribbean territories, in which the dependency on France has become almost total.

If the continuation of the French connection makes sense for France in terms of its wider global strategy, the question remains as to whether it is in the interests of

the Caribbean territories themselves and how their populations perceive their present and future relations with France.

There is no doubt that there have been significant expressions of resistance and revolt at various stages in the relationship, culminating in demands for independence. Aimé Césaire, himself, for many years the major political figure in Martiniquan politics, has been one of the most eloquent opponents of colonialism. Yet it was also Césaire who brought in the *départementalisation* policy. There is no doubt that this was seen as one way to bring about the end of colonialism, by becoming full members of the French nation, just like any other *département*. In some ways, the history of the islands had predisposed them to favour this solution. As we have seen, the effects of the French Revolution had been dramatic in the Caribbean islands and summoned up the vision of a France synonymous with the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, in direct opposition to the reactionary, colonial France, synonymous with the slave trade and colonial slavery, which reasserted its power in the colonies.

This dichotomy came to be articulated through the notion of the 'two Frances', representing, on the one hand, the best, most noble, progressive aspects of its ideology and, on the other, the bloody, racist repression of imperialist France at its worst. In this scenario, the triumph of the Second Republic, along with the abolition of slavery and the introduction of universal manhood suffrage, was seen as the triumph of the 'good France', as the subsequent setbacks under Louis Napoleon were seen as the reassertion of the 'bad France'.

This division into the two Frances, however unrealistic it may have been, was also reinforced by the position of the *Békés*, the whites who had settled on the islands from the earliest periods of slavery, and who were more inclined to defend their own interests, as plantation owners and one-time slave owners, than to subscribe to the ideals of the French Republic. Indeed, many had seen British rule preferable to the abolition of slavery (James (1938)/1980; Geggus 1982). Amongst the rest of the island population, these attitudes reinforced the notion of a divide between the 'bad France' associated with the local white planters and the happy land of the 'good France' of the Republic, far, far away, which through the establishment of the Third Republic in the 1870s brought back into effect the formal rights of French citizenship for all male adults in the old colonies, enabling them to participate in French national, as well as the subsequent local, elections, in line with the inhabitants of mainland France. At the same time, a number of factors ensured that their status remained that of a colony. With notable exceptions, such as Gaston Monnerville, from 1932, the majority of elected representatives were chosen from the white, or partially white, inhabitants. Moreover, the existence of a colonial governor ensured direct French control over the islands' affairs. This arrangement suited the *Békés*, as it ensured some opportunity for influence and manipulation of policy at local level, as well as their ongoing control of the local economy (Burton and Reno 1995: 3).

The problematic of the two Frances was brought into play once more in the Second World War with the triumph of the (good) Free French, which included so

many Caribbean volunteers, over the (bad) supporters of Vichy. This was, in some respects, a continuation of the so-called *impôt du sang*, or blood tax, whereby, in the absence of any formal requirement for the islands' inhabitants to do military service, they nonetheless demonstrated their loyalty to France. It was, however, also a clear case of taking sides, with the 'good France' of de Gaulle and against the 'bad France' of the Vichyite Governor Admiral Robert.

The support for the full integration of the former colonies as *départements* of France has also to be seen in this light. In opting for this solution to the problem of colonialism in 1946, Aimé Césaire, newly elected as *député* as well as mayor of Fort-de-France, along with Léopold Bissol, a Guianese *député*, and Raymond Vergès, from La Réunion, hoped to build on the wartime alliance with the Free French to become fully integrated into the 'French family'. The scenario was one in which the ideological weapons provided by the 'good France' would be used against the 'bad France', perceived as the colonial enemy. It was a challenge to end colonialism from within the French hegemony.

Unsurprisingly, it was from the *Békés* that the main opposition came to the *départementalisation* of 1946. In fact, however, this was not such a radical transformation, as had been feared, or hoped. Already, the colonies had been declared *'partie intégrante'* of France in the French Constitution of 1795 (Burton and Reno 1995). Moreover, even after *départementalisation*, the Caribbean *départements* remained differentiated from those of mainland France in a number of ways. On the one hand, this difference has been perceived as insufficient equality, and major struggles were necessary to extend the full and equal application of French legislation to the DOM, particularly in the fields of social security and the minimum wage (Burton and Reno 1995: 4). On the other hand, there was also a concern that the specific needs of the islands could not be catered for by one-size-fits-all legislation. The DOM were clearly not the same as any other *département* of France in a number of respects. However, their new constitutional status did not allow recognition of this fact and put obstacles in the way of differential treatment, even where appropriate.

There is no doubt that the hoped-for benefits of integration as a French department have not materialised to the extent that may have been envisaged in 1946. The most serious consequence has been the catastrophic decline of the economy, with corresponding social collapse. The old sugar-based economy went into rapid collapse, unable to compete with the European sugar-beet industry. There is now little production of any significance, and what there is is largely uncompetitive on world markets, given the high labour costs in line with expectations of French rates. The islands survive on imports from France, from which practically everything, including basic foodstuffs, is brought. This is made possible, in its turn, by the injection of French subsidies, increasing the dependency of the population, many of whom are unable to find employment and rely on social welfare benefits. Investment has been largely speculative in character, with the promotion and development of retail, leisure and tourist facilities that have severely damaged the environment in many cases and have led to great resentment of what is known as the *bétonisation* of the islands (Burton and Reno 1995).

Even so, there is nowadays very little popular support for independence and not all the economic and social problems can be attributed to *départementalisation.* Indeed, the political life of the islands is marked by a high level of apathy, with massive abstention rates from electoral politics (Burton and Reno 1995: 14). In spite of the ravages suffered by the economy, the undoubted material benefits of the association with France are there for all to see. The overall standard of living is extremely high in comparison with other islands in the Caribbean, such as Saint Lucia, and particularly the dire situation of a country like Haiti. Car ownership, in particular, per head of population is higher than in France itself (Confiant 1996). This has, on the one hand, encouraged some feeling of superiority amongst the inhabitants, who are proud of their link with France and consider themselves French. The high levels of emigration to metropolitan France, estimated at 400,000 or so and thus surpassing the population of Martinique, have also reinforced these ties, with constant movement back and forth across the Atlantic (Anselin 1990). At the same time, there is also a simmering feeling of resentment at the dependency that is the corollary and a distinct sense of alienation, characteristic of the state of mind expressed by the islanders. All of this is well recognised.

In January 2000, Patrick Chamoiseau, along with Gérard Delver, Edouard Glissant and Bertène Juminer, published a 'Manifesto to provide a new start for the DOM', in which they described this alienation in these terms:

> Departmentalisation has undeniably set in motion processes of modernisation, raising the standard of living, general improvement of conditions of existence and social relations, but it has also been perverted into a syndrome of generalised welfare benefits, increased dependency and an anaesthetisation of the population which took deeper and deeper hold, the more the transfer of public money increased in volume. (Chamoiseau et al. 2000)

On 3 May 2000, Raphaël Confiant gave a talk at the French Institute in London, in which he described the relation to France as one of a woman to a man, where the woman is entirely kept. The man (France) may eventually want a divorce. If so, the woman will then have to work to earn her own living, but, until then, she will be happy to stay in this situation of total dependence.

Whether one feels inclined to reject this rather old-fashioned view of relationships as a suitable metaphor for this 'postcoloniality without independence' or not, there is no doubt that there is little real independent political control over decision-making, either in respect of internal, local policy or with regard to relations with neighbours or as part of the wider world. On the international stage, the DOM are represented only through France, which has consistently vetoed their classification as colonies at the United Nations, with the support of other former colonies, including Senegal under Senghor. They are part of Europe, by dint of being part of France, and yet have no voice of their own in determining European policy. Relations with their Caribbean neighbours are still undeveloped, in spite of attempts

to forge closer ties with the Caricom trading partners, ironically by France becoming a member of this body. It remains easier to travel between Martinique and France than locally within the Caribbean. Even within the world of *La Francophonie*, they are seriously under-represented.

There is some support for full independence, and greater support for more regional autonomy. The Martiniquan nationalist and President of the Conseil Régional de Martinique, Alfred Marie-Jeanne, has campaigned along these lines, along with the representatives of Guadeloupe and Guiana. Earlier nationalist movements, such as the OJAM (*Organisation de la jeunesse anticolonialiste de la Martinique*), created in 1962, were quickly repressed.[5] However, to a certain extent, there appears to have been a transfer of political energy into the cultural domain. Indeed, since 1946, it has been the importance of cultural difference that has been highlighted rather than the grounds for national independence. Césaire and other Caribbean thinkers, while warning of the dangers of 'cultural genocide',[6] have accepted that the political battle has to be waged on the terrain of equality, substantial not formal, within the framework of the French nation.

The Caribbean territories have thus become something of an 'exception' within the overall contours of the anticolonial struggles and there is a certain irony in the fact that two of the great thinkers of the anticolonial national liberation struggles, Césaire and Fanon, who had such an impact elsewhere in the world, did not put their theories to the test on their home soil. In Césaire's case, it is notable that his most important writings denouncing colonialism were produced after *départementalisation*, yet one would be hard-pressed to find any specific analysis or strategy for the Caribbean in texts such as the *Discourse on Colonialism*, published in 1955. Although there was palpable disappointment with the outcome of assimilation, there is no suggestion of going back on that choice, and Césaire's political strategy remained limited to seeking further reforms to improve the economic and social situation of the population. His disillusion comes through, nonetheless, in his poetry, where he notably described Martinique as an 'absurdly botched version of paradise' (*'une version du paradis absurdement ratée'*) (Césaire 1982).

The development of theories of *créolité* and creolisation (see Chapter 7) has also had an impact, albeit more limited, in the political sphere, where they have contributed to the development of a new perspective on the position of the Caribbean territories in the world. In this conception, borders are fluid; relations of interaction extend to the international plane, where they take place between different peoples, cultures and ideas.

In the 'Manifeste pour refonder les DOM', mentioned above, it is made clear that the issues that concern the Caribbean territories cannot be resolved through the bilateral relationship with France alone. Just as there is a global dimension to the problems, so too are the options available for their solution global in scope. 'The world, and not only France, is on our horizon,' the authors proclaimed. 'It was through *départementalisation* that France gave us access to her world. We ourselves must now gain access to the world's horizons' (Chamoiseau et al. 2000). However,

there was nothing utopian about this text. Instead, the key approach was characterised by realism, combined with a recognition of the importance of synthesis and inclusivity and a desire to face up to the very specific situation of the Caribbean territories.

At the same time, a redefinition of the relationship to the land has also been characteristic of this type of thinking. Where alienation and exile from the ancestral lands of Africa had formed the dominant paradigm in the past, the new thinking emphasises the importance of acknowledging organic ties to the soil of the Caribbean territories, within an ecological perspective that respects the unity and interdependence of all aspects of the environment and its living organisms. This is in stark contrast to the exploitation of men and nature characteristic of the plantation economy and also a response to the effects of *bétonisation*.

There is, of course, a certain irony that this should be so in what are, in reality, some of the last colonies of France.

Notes

1. As Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard have put it: 'Cet aspect de la "visibilité" des immigrés issus de l'ex-Empire colonial français reste profondément ancré dans la société française contemporaine' (Bancel and Blanchard 1997: 29, note 26).

2. 'Dans le monde blanc, l'homme de couleur rencontre des difficultés dans l'élaboration de son schéma corporel. La connaissance du corps est une activité uniquement négatrice. C'est une connaissance en troisième personne' (Fanon (1952)/1975: 89).

3. In fact, the harem was normally confined to a small urban elite and did not represent the reality of the situation of most 'oriental' women (Clancy-Smith and Gray-Ware Metcalf 1993).

4. 'L'image est produit de son temps mais aussi révélateur des non-dits d'une société, de ses fantasmes, de ses phobies. Elle rend possible une reconstitution du contexte mental dans lequel s'inscrit sa relation à l'Autre' (Bancel and Blanchard 1997: 9).

5. Their manifesto appears as an appendix in Confiant 1996: 313–16.

6. Speech by Césaire in the Assemblée nationale, February 1978.

Chapter 11
Postcoloniality:
The French Dimension?

After examining various aspects of the long history of France's relationships with her erstwhile or present colonies, the point has been reached where we need to pose the question of what the specifically French dimension to postcoloniality might be or, indeed, whether there is a French dimension to postcoloniality. At the heart of these questions is the matter of the continuing relevance of postcoloniality as an influence on these relationships, as a factor of explanation of some of the issues on the present agenda or as part of any strategy for the future.

Postcolonialism and the New 'New World Order'

There is a general consensus in the world today regarding the existence of unacceptable poverty and inequality. While there is no general agreement on the causes of this great global divide between the affluent, 'developed' countries and the wretched, 'underdeveloped' countries, there are few coherent explanations on offer that do not situate its origins in the history of imperialism. According to this type of explanation, the causes of the present lamentable state of many of the poorest, most indebted countries of the planet lie in their former status as colonies or semi-colonies of the world's imperial powers. To contest this is to discount the fact that the single shared characteristic of all those countries worst affected today is their historical status as former colonies.

There is no shortage of people today who will argue that imperialism was, on the whole, a good thing, beneficial to the territories and peoples concerned, bringing in its train peace, prosperity and, most importantly, development. Niall Ferguson has made this case for the British Empire (Ferguson 2003). Even the British Chancellor, Gordon Brown, campaigning for measures to bring an end to poverty during his tour of Africa in January 2005, sang to the same hymn-sheet. It was time, he said, to stop apologising for Britain's colonial history. The British should be proud of those who had formed the backbone of the British Empire, which had been 'open, outward and international' (*Guardian*, 27 January 2005). He repeated these views in an interview

on BBC Newsnight on 14 March 2005, when he stressed it was time to put forward the positive virtues of British values (*The Times*, 15 March 2005). This is in contrast to recently reported remarks by Jacques Chirac, who is reported to have responded angrily to criticism of Africans taking their children out of school to work in the fields with a reminder of the realities of French colonialism (*Libération*, 21 September 2004). We have seen, however, in Chapter 8, that, at the instigation of members of his own political movement, a law normalising the revisionist revalorisation of colonialism was passed in February 2005, provoking considerable controversy. For the apologists of empire, the corollary of their position is that it was not imperialism or colonialism that contributed to the current problems, but the ending of empire; it was the accession to independence that arrested the development process, thus leading to underdevelopment.

The links between imperialism and development, along with the ambiguities and contradictions that arise, have already been discussed in Chapter 2. Any theory that emphasises 'development' as the primary process at work in empire risks elision into an apologia for imperialism and colonialism. The impetus for the historical spread of global capitalism needs to be sought elsewhere, in the grasping of the opportunities for making profits and super-profits. Viewed in this light, it becomes clear that it is not underdevelopment that is the prime issue but super-exploitation. In other words, it is because of super-exploitation on the part of the imperialist economic powers that global capitalism has produced the effects it has, not because of underdevelopment on the part of the formerly colonised, aided and abetted by the failings of the post-independence regimes. Arguing otherwise is an attempt to shift responsibility from the perpetrators to the victims.

Moreover, revisionist theories of imperialism tend to prioritise the political benefits of empire. The peace and order brought by the imperial administration and juridical system are highlighted. 'Development' is often seen primarily in educational, moral or cultural terms and the primacy of the economic processes at work is obscured. If, on the contrary, the analysis grounds itself in these economic processes, it produces an account of their continuity into the present age, whereby the same fundamental operations of capital accumulation and extraction of super-profits operate within a framework that continues to be dominated by the hegemony of finance capital, with the addition of the further opportunities generated by unequal trade and by the servicing of debts incurred in a development process largely based on importing technology, as well as the trading in arms to shore up post-independence regimes in confrontations with real or imagined internal or external enemies.

One of the positive features of a postcolonial framework of analysis is thus to stress this continuity in a world where the formal end of colonialism has not diminished the overall economic, political and cultural hegemony of the 'North' or the 'West' or the G7/G8 countries over the rest of the world, where, on the contrary, this hegemony has adapted to new circumstances and gone from strength to strength to become all-pervasive. The underlying binary divide between those who mainly benefit from the current global economic system and those who mainly suffer its undesirable consequences is still fundamental, in spite of the challenges by some

former colonies or semi-colonies in Asia and Latin America that are increasingly moving into stronger economic positions and demanding their share of the cake. Moreover, although power has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of the United States, the former European colonial powers still have important roles to play in maintaining the systemic hegemony of global capitalism, as well as in carving out for themselves particular spheres of influence.

The picture is, of course, further complicated by the alliances that are forged between nations and groups of nations on either side of the divide, bringing in diverse regimes as junior partners in this globalised system. France, however, more than any other of the former European colonial powers, has consistently maintained a policy of consolidation and strengthening its influence in key parts of its former empire, notably in Africa. It has done this with ever-increasing sophistication, employing the full gamut of representations and discourses to convince the formerly colonised world of the benefits and attractions of remaining within the French orbit, whilst remaining ready to intervene with more crude political or military means if the situation appears to warrant it. Its recent involvement in the Ivory Coast is a case in point, or, at least, this is how it has been perceived. Indeed, in an interview published in *Le Parisien*, the Ivory Coast President, Laurent Gbagbo, compared the intervention of troops participating in Operation Licorne to that of the Soviet tanks in Prague in 1968, claiming that this was how things worked in the cosiness of the French fold (*Le Monde*, 16 December 2004).[1]

France has used its colonial history and relationships to support its attempts to go it alone, often in partial defiance of American interests, as with its nuclear policy and its various challenges to the dominance of American mass culture. France has also contrived to maintain, and indeed extend, an independent sphere of influence in Africa and the Middle East, particularly with its pro-Arab policy, including its nuanced opposition to the war in Iraq in 2004. To some extent, this was facilitated by the little interest which America has shown hitherto in Africa, though this now appears to be in the process of changing, as also with American efforts to encourage the formation of a new Middle Eastern grouping, linked by adherence to the 'democratic way'. There is also clear evidence of keen American interest in Algeria in particular, formerly considered the *chasse gardée* of France, but now seen as a linchpin of American policy to create the *'grand Moyen-Orient'* not only because of its oil, but also because of the role it might play in collaboration on security issues, with joint military exercises with NATO already under way (Roberts 2003; *Guardian*, 3 March 2003; *Quotidien d'Oran*, 14 April, 11 November, 1 December 2004).

The relation with France continues, of course, to play an important role. After a shaky start with the new regime of President Bouteflika in 1999, when French criticism of the election was dismissed with outrage by Bouteflika as evidence that Paris still wished to exert a 'form of protectorate' over Algeria (*Le Monde*, 30 July 1999), France has gone out of its way to attempt to mend relations and set them on a new footing.

France has also not been slow to stretch out a hand to the former African colonies of other European powers, notably those of Britain, which have been made very

welcome for some years now at the Franco-African summits that have taken place since 1973. Rivalry between the spheres of influence of *Francophonie* and *Anglophonie* has also operated elsewhere in the world, even in the South Pacific, as in the case of the territory formerly known as the New Hebrides, and jointly administered as an Anglo-French condominium until its independence in 1980 (Ager 1996).

Indeed, France has appeared more than ready to impinge on the British sphere of influence, for instance, with its invitation to President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe to join the 22nd Franco-African summit in Paris in February 2003, in apparent defiance of the sanctions and travel ban imposed on his regime by the European Union, the United States and the Commonwealth (*Le Monde*, 20 February 2003). The re-emergence of rivalries between the former colonial powers may well presage future developments.

There is certainly evidence that France is taking unilateral action or seeking alliances from within continental Europe to plough a different furrow and not follow Britain's lead in wishing to stay in the slipstream of American foreign policy. The United States, in its turn, has felt under no obligation to respect the spheres of influence of the former European colonial powers, and has become increasingly interventionist in recent years. Following the trauma of its failed intervention in Vietnam, there had been something of a moratorium, during which it had been content, by and large, to exert its domination through client, puppet regimes and, indeed, to remain wary of direct military involvement in other countries. Of course, this reluctance to take military action had not extended to its own backyard in Central and South America, where it was heavily involved in covert or semi-clandestine operations, such as its support for the Contras in Nicaragua and the Pinochet regime in Chile, or overt actions, such as the invasion of Grenada in 1983. In the case of Grenada, a former British colony and member of the British Commonwealth, Ronald Reagan was prepared to put his alliance with Britain and special relationship with Margaret Thatcher in jeopardy by going ahead with this action without consultation or regard for the Queen's position of sovereignty with regard to the island. Moreover, from the beginning of the 1990s, America has become increasingly ready to contemplate direct military intervention further afield to protect or develop its economic and political interests, beginning with the first Gulf War in 1991.

Another consequence of the further developments undergone by global capitalism, is that 'North' and 'South' can no longer, if they ever could, be considered as monolithic blocs facing each other across a single clear divide. The cracks and divisions between the powers that collectively constitute the North, whilst never entirely absent, have begun seriously to undermine the whole edifice constructed upon the major global alliances. Similarly, the uneven development of global capitalism within the countries that could formally be considered part of the 'South', or the 'majority world', has dramatically changed the picture, with new and changing alliances the order of the day.

Postcolonial analysis has tended not to take these developments fully on board, although its stress on the continuity of the postcolonial relation has also been

tempered by an emphasis on the evolution of that relation into new and changing forms, in what some would see as an overstating of the extent to which contradictions have been eliminated. To take into account the actual complexities of the power shifts and increasing, if uneven, involvement of the 'majority world' countries in the systemic functioning of global capitalism, a more complex analysis is needed. At the same time, any such analysis also needs to determine where the fault-lines currently fall between those who profit from such a system and those whose sufferings are largely due to it.

As well as an analysis of the economic relations, labour and trading issues, operations of international finance and so on that this would require, but which is outside the scope of this book, the importance of looking more deeply into the type of thinking that is dominant at the present time should not be neglected. This relates not just to theoretical analyses of the problems and their possible solutions but also to the use of ideology, by which is meant here credible representations for the rationalisation of the status quo or future enterprises and ventures.

Before moving on to a discussion of some of these theoretical issues, it will probably be useful to sum up the various stages in the development of postcoloniality to arrive at a clearer understanding of the present situation.

Since decolonisation, the configuration of international relations between the different powers has been subject to a series of important modifications. The predominance of the former great European powers, with their system of ad hoc bilateral treaties and alliances, was replaced with the emergence of the two superpowers in the wake of the Second World War along with their rival camps and allies. This meant that the period of decolonisation was closely overlain and interwoven with the ongoing confrontation between the Soviet bloc and the American-led alliance NATO.

However, even at the height of the polarisation of the conflict between the two blocs (Korean War, Cuban Missile Crisis, Cold War, Vietnam War), often played out through proxies in the former European colonies, it was never the only show in town. All over the globe, new multilateral alliances were being forged. Moreover, the polarity of the Cold War was never absolute, and the international communist movement was already showing signs of fission with the Sino-Soviet split in 1961.

At the global level, major international institutions came into being, not least of these being the United Nations itself, with its institutional structures reflecting the balance of global forces at the end of the Second World War, but also the so-called Bretton Woods international financial institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. It was also the time for the emergence of new regional groupings, including the Arab League in 1944, the OAS (Organisation of American States) in 1948 and the beginning of the process of European construction from 1952, as well as military alliances, such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

The formal ending of the British and French Empires contributed to this process with the expansion of the British Commonwealth (formerly comprised of the old Dominions of Canada, Australia, etc.) to the 'new Commonwealth' countries and the more gradual growth of *La Francophonie* in the French sphere of influence. In the

process or wake of decolonisation, further groupings were initiated, notably the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union) in 1963, ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) in 1967, UAM (Union of the Arab Maghreb) in 1989 and many others.

In the immediate aftermath of decolonisation, it became customary to articulate the divisions on the basis of the concepts of the First, Second and Third Worlds. The notion of the Third World, *'Tiers-Monde'*, appeared first in French, before being taken up in English. Its first use is generally credited to Alfred Sauvy in an article of *L'Observateur* of 14 August 1952, in which he made the specific connection with the Third Estate – *'ce Tiers-Monde, ignoré, exploité, méprisé, comme le Tiers-Etat'*, as in the Abbé Sieyès's pamphlet of 1789. The terms 'First World' and 'Second World' appeared much later (1967 and 1974, respectively) and then in English.

The reasoning behind this threefold division always appeared confused and confusing. On the one hand, it took the old division of French *Ancien Régime* society into three estates (the aristocracy, the clergy and the rest, grouped into the third estate) and superimposed thereon the clash of the different socio-economic models and power blocs represented by capitalism and communism. The result was a hybrid in which, in some versions at least, the First World represented the capitalist West, the Second the communist East and the third, broadly speaking, the formerly colonised or newly independent countries.

In effect, the division of the world along these lines was an ideological construct that could not possibly satisfy anyone, except possibly some denizens of the First World, who could wallow in their supposed superiority, and some supporters of Third Worldism. For the latter, the attraction lay in the justification it provided for their demands for the Third World to come into its own and achieve parity with the others, in some new version of the French Revolution.

The notion of the Third World has also been linked to the category of the 'non-aligned' countries. The Non-Aligned Movement, which emerged from the 1955 Bandung Conference of twenty-nine African and Asian countries, was formally established at its first conference, held in 1961 in Belgrade. The Yugoslavian leader, Tito, was one of its main instigators, along with Nehru, Nkrumah, Sukarno and Nasser. The idea was to encourage and support close cooperation between these countries, particularly as far as their development agenda was concerned, while avoiding the pitfalls of too close an alliance with one or other of the superpowers. The structures of the movement, which still meets every three years, were deliberately kept vague, in order to avoid infiltration and undue influence by the superpowers. In reality, however, many of these countries were allied, to a greater or lesser extent, to one or other of the blocs, which went out of their way to court them. Much of the work of the Non-Aligned Movement has traditionally been carried out at the United Nations, which, during the Cold War period, was not ineffective in maintaining some kind of balance between the two power blocs and keeping a watching brief over the (former) colonies.

Many in the so-called 'Third World', however, rejected this categorisation as demeaning and not in correspondence with their real potential economic and political power. In many ways, it seemed to reinforce the tendencies of the former

colonial powers to dominate their former colonial possessions, albeit in new forms, collectively categorised as neocolonialism, most notably by Kwame Nkrumah in his book N*eo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (Nkrumah 1965). Yet, for all its difficulties, the notion of the Third World did reflect at least the perceived need for the countries concerned to come together and cooperate in the face of the common problems they faced, in a process that transcended the old bilateral forms of domination and subservience characteristic of colonialism. To an extent, therefore, there was some counterweight to offset the continuing of the colonial relations under new forms. In reality, the support of the Soviet bloc, and later the Chinese communists, was of much more substantial help in terms of material and ideological support. Most of the former French colonies, however, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, with the singular exception of Sékou Touré's Guinea, were content to remain within the bilateral fold and relied heavily on French paternalistic patronage.

The configuration of global forces was dramatically changed by the collapse of Soviet power at the end of the 1980s. On the one hand, this led to the growing hegemony of US power worldwide, although, again, this was never absolute. The last two decades of the twentieth century were dominated by the assertion of American power throughout the globe and attempts to stamp the triumph of capitalism indelibly on the weaker economies of the world through the mechanisms of the international financial institutions. Nonetheless, however great the power of the United States during this period, other new forces were already emerging that would eventually challenge the existence of a single pole of dominance. The rise of new capitalist powers, not least the so-called Asian tigers, began to challenge the economic pre-eminence of the West. Moreover, new blocs, such as the enlarged and reconfigured European Union, came into being to counterbalance American power, not just on the economic front, but also potentially on the political front.

During this period, France pursued its own policies, in its own way and using those instruments available to it: cosy paternalism or outright military interventionism in its bilateral relations, struggles for influence and leadership in Europe, growing recognition of the potential of the *Francophone* movement and willingness to be involved. Increasingly, France has put itself forward as the champion of the wretched of the earth, presenting an alternative that is often couched in terms to the Left of the other options. In many ways, it is a position that is largely based on rhetoric, a rhetoric that has been associated with the vision of the 'good France'. Thus, de Gaulle could claim in his New Year message for 1968 that 'the objectives of our action are related to each other and, because they are French, correspond to the interests of humanity'. In his presidential inauguration address of 21 May 1981, François Mitterrand also spoke of 'a France standing for justice and solidarity, governed by the desire to live in peace with everyone, [which] may act as a beacon for the progress of the human race' (www.elysee.fr/instit/invests.htm).

The power of its rhetoric and its real effect in the world cannot, however, be denied. It is significant that, following France's support for the Palestinian cause and, specifically, its assistance to the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, over his last years, the only flag flown at his funeral at Ramallah, apart from the Palestinian national

flag, was the French tricolour, which was explicitly (re)claimed as the symbol of revolt and freedom (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 17 November 2004).

For the post-independence countries, this period was not a happy one on the whole, with a decline in their economic performance, a decrease in revenue from trade, growing indebtedness and loss of control over their own policies, with measures imposed on them from outside. The dawning of the new millennium, closely followed by the attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001, marked the inauguration of a further new phase in international relations.

On the one hand, the USA became even more determined to exert its global hegemony, with the launching of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, in the name of the fight against terror. Yet again, the old dualism characteristic of relations between the imperial powers and those being subjugated has assumed a new form, though drawing on the same basic model that has been adapted from the dawn of the global capitalist age. The notions of an international law applicable on the same terms to all nations is once again challenged by the notion of the restriction of this law to a particular category of nation or state, with those considered to be beyond the pale no longer covered by the terms of international conventions and treaties. The idea that there are some 'terrorists' to whom the normal internationally accepted standards of human rights and war conventions need not apply can be traced back to the earlier beliefs that the heathen are not covered by the accepted norms of Christendom and that the barbarians can be subject to any treatment decided by the 'civilised'.

John Stuart Mill had already ridiculed the idea that international law should be applied to all:

> There is a great difference between the case in which the nations concerned are of the same, or something like the same, degree of civilization, and that in which one of the parties to the situation is of a high, and the other of a very low, grade of social improvement. To suppose that the same international customs, and the same rules of international morality, can obtain between one civilized nation and another and between civilized nations and barbarians is a grave error, and one which no statesman can fall into, however it may be that those who, from a safe and unresponsible position criticize statesmen ... To characterize any conduct towards the barbarous people as a violation of the Law of Nations, only shows that he who so speaks has never considered the subject. (John Stuart Mill, 'A Few Words on Non-Intervention', in *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. 3, London, 1867, pp. 153–58, quoted by Mazrui 1990: 19)

At the same time, new tendencies began to emerge. Amongst these was the growing realisation that something had to be done about the plight of the world's poor if the global system was to continue to function. Thus, the early years of the Third Millennium have seen a number of initiatives, ranging from non-governmental campaigns to cancel the debt of the world's poorest countries (Jubilee 2000) to government-sponsored initiatives, such as Britain for Africa. France's contribution to

this process has been to continue to work through the organisations of *Francophonie*, as well as to investigate new methods of financing aid, notably through international taxation (see Chapter 8). In all of this, there has been a certain amount of possibly healthy rivalry for influence as prime benefactor of Africa's neediest states. There has been much promotional coverage and star-studded publicity for these initiatives.

At the same time, and largely unannounced in the Western press, the African countries themselves have been getting together and putting together their own initiatives for dealing with the problems they face. One of the most significant of these initiatives in recent times has been the setting up of NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) by the African Union. The five initiating heads of state of Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa were given a mandate to develop a strategic framework for development, which was formally adopted at the 37th Summit of what was then still the Organisation for African Unity in 2001.

It stresses as its primary objectives: (1) to eradicate poverty; (2) to place African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development; (3) to halt the marginalisation of Africa in the globalisation process and enhance its full and beneficial integration into the global economy; and (4) to accelerate the empowerment of women (http://www.nepad.org). To achieve these goals, it has laid down a number of principles that are intended to guide the strategy. First among these is that of 'good governance', posited as 'a basic requirement for peace, security and sustainable political and socio-economic development'. To achieve this good governance, a number of principles and novel practices have been proposed, such as the monitoring and evaluation on a reciprocal basis, in a type of peer assessment, of progress made in improving the quality and transparency of government and administration, as well as the fight against corruption.

Absolutely central to the strategy is the idea of 'African ownership and leadership', the full use of all African resources and the participation of all Africans, as well as Africa-wide cooperation in the effort to achieve development, in which the transformation of the 'unequal partnership between Africa and the developed world' does not just constitute an objective in its own right, but is also an integral part of the process (http://www.nepad.org). The reclamation of the right and responsibility for self-evaluation is a crucial part of the aim to take back control from the 'donor' nations and international financial institutions. Twenty-four African countries signed up to the MAEP (*Mécanisme africain d'évaluation par les pairs*), set up in March 2003. Of these, four countries (Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius and Rwanda) were due to be appraised at the beginning of 2005, and Algeria at the end of the year (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 17 November 2004).

The initiative to set up NEPAD appears to have inspired a number of new groupings, often on the basis of specific alliances to achieve particular pragmatic goals linked to development, on a bilateral or regional sub-grouping basis, such as the South Africa–Algeria Binational Commission and the South Africa–Algeria Business Forum. These new associations are concrete evidence of the expression of a new determination for African countries to take back the reins and regain control of their own development in partnership with their neighbours.

Given the immensity of the problems, the extent of the obstacles posed by the world economic and political order and its inbuilt inequality and exploitation, the scale of indebtedness, the material shortages, the lack of infrastructure, the prevalence of disease and armed conflict, together with an entrenched culture of profiteering by unaccountable leaders and the extent and intensity of previous disappointments, it remains to be seen whether a turning point has indeed been reached and, if it has, whether such efforts will be allowed to make progress happen without being stymied from either within or without.

There is, however, considerable evidence that these developments are marking a new phase, or at any rate a new discourse, a new will to bring in this new phase, which is, in any event, a necessary, if not sufficient, condition of its coming into being in reality. The assertion that 'where there is a will, there is a way' may not always be founded on fact; however, where there is no will, there is certainly never going to be a way.

Not only are the new approaches and initiatives a sign of a new pragmatism, a determination to employ those means that are likely to prove effective in kick-starting the process of development and making eclectic choices from a variety of possibilities, but they may also be described in terms of a process of 'normalisation', or the beginnings of a process to move towards normalisation.

Normalisation and Order

By normalisation is meant a shift away from the parameters of the colonial or postcolonial relations, in which the status of the post-independence states is determined in relation to their former status as colonies. It means engaging with other countries, including the former colonial power, without the colonial history being the primary factor defining the terms of the relationship, whether this has been to make colonialism the cause of current ills or to lock coloniser and colonised in a never-ending regurgitation of old sores or disabling dependency.

One of the effects of these developments has been to ensure that the opportunities for alliances and cooperation are now greater than they have ever been for the post-independence states. Increasingly, they are realising the advantages of playing the field, rather than tying themselves too closely to any particular ally or patron. Those countries involved in the NEPAD initiative do not rule out cooperation with initiatives coming from elsewhere. Indeed, these opportunities have been welcomed so long as they are in line with the basic principles of African self-development (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 1 December 2004). Algeria has become adept at taking advantage of all the possibilities open to it over the last few years and is consequently courted by France and the US, while it is increasingly active within the African continent, the Arab world and the Maghreb. Investment has been sought and obtained from a wide variety of countries outside the postcolonial orbit of previous years. China, Turkey, Japan all have an important role to play and plans have been announced for the Indian steel magnate, Lakshmi Mittal, to take over much of the former state-owned steel industry (*Liberté*, 20 December 2004).

Normalisation in this sense, then, implies finding a new basis for international relations that is not founded on the previous colonial order. It seems opportune at this point to look a little more closely at the concept of 'order' and the role it has played in global capitalist imperialism.

It has already appeared as part of the rationale for imperialism put forward by the imperialist powers, which were wont to portray their colonial endeavours as bringing 'order', in economic, political, social and cultural terms, to the benighted regions of the globe. However, it has also played an important, though less discussed, part in anticolonial discourse.

First, it plays a part in the analysis of the colonial period itself, which is seen as an aberration, a departure from normality, a disturbance of the proper balance of things, a disruption or a state of disorder. Fanon, for instance, spoke of Europe's 'disorder', its 'mad rush to the abyss'.[2] For Césaire, it was the relations between Europe and the non-European peoples that were marked by disorder and abnormality. He saw the end of colonialism as the premise of a return to order. Speaking of the importance of the 1955 Bandung Conference, he made it clear that it was not Europe or European civilisation that was condemned at this event, it was the 'intolerable form that, in the name of Europe, some people thought they had to impose on the relations that should normally be in place between Europe and the non-European peoples'. The Bandung Conference marked the moment when it was made clear to Europe that 'the time of European imperialism was over and that, for the greater good of civilisation, it was necessary for Europe to return to the common order'.[3] This was not posited as a return to some golden age in the past. For Césaire, it implied a return to a normal state of affairs, how things should be in the proper order of things.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, Césaire was well aware that the process by which it would be achieved would be characterised by disorder, even the violent whirlwind of revolution. For Fanon too, there had to be a process of disorder. 'Decolonisation', he said, 'which proposed changing the order of the world, is, as you can see, a programme of absolute disorder' (Fanon (1961)/1987: 25). This may mean violence or disruption of traditional social divisions and cultural practices, as for instance with the participation of women in militant activity of one type or another. However, not all anticolonial fighters have seen the process of liberation as necessarily entailing disorder. The struggle itself may create its own kind of order, or discipline, as M'hamed Férid Ghazi remarked, in connection with women and old people participating in the nationalist demonstrations (Ghazi 1956).[4] Indeed, some advocates of the Gandhian theory of non-violence, *satyagraha*, have seen the struggle itself as the articulation of order or discipline. This was in stark contrast to the perceived lack of order on the part of the British Raj. When asked what he thought about Western civilisation by a British journalist in 1931, Gandhi famously replied that 'I think it would be a good idea' (http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/society_culture/multicultural/).

As for the objectives of the anticolonial struggles, the notion of a return to order or a movement forward to establish a new order had figured high up on the agenda. Moves to establish a new order have often taken the shape of a future utopia or ideal society, whether this be one based on socialism or communism, secular nationalism

or Islamic law, or indeed a neo-conservative paradise, in which the all-embracing powers of the state are used to 'roll back the state'.

Fine though some of these ideal societies may sound, there is a conceptual problem that is common to them all. All are based on a conception of the world that implies that there will be an end to struggle, an end to contradiction. Whether this be in the form of the classless society, the stateless society, the conflict-free society, all imply the end of history as a dynamic process based on struggle and a static conception of the new order.

This is where the problem arises, for, in fact, ongoing critique and struggle will always be a vital part of any new order. There can be no once-and-for-all new order that will make everything right for all time. New problems will arise, which will require new solutions. There will be a constant need to challenge the status quo, to carry out new analyses, to redefine and adjust goals and objectives in the light of new circumstances and developments. New strategies for dealing with problems will be required. The new order will never be in stasis, but will present a number of interacting dynamic, dialectical processes, offering the potential for new ways forward, as well as the risk of regression. Rather than seeing this as the unavoidable failure of utopian solutions or as an inevitable source of disappointment and disillusion leading to inactivity and resignation, there is a more positive way of seeing how this opens up opportunities to engage with history in a more responsible, critical and mature way.

Returning to the issue of 'normalisation', it is time now to sum up how far one can describe the relations between France and her former empire as still characterised by postcolonialism, and how far they can now be seen as 'normalised' in the sense used above. What is clear is that there is no single paradigm, but rather a number of different patterns, ranging from ongoing colonial relations in the case of the DOM and to a lesser extent the TOM, via the continuation of colonial-type relations between France and many of her former sub-Saharan African colonies, to the enduring vestiges of paradigms and attitudes deriving from colonialism in the case of the postcolonial diaspora living in France.

There are undoubted moves on the part of some former colonies, notably Algeria, to move away from the postcolonial framework. All this suggests that the transition away from postcoloniality may be under way, but these countries are still on the cusp of change and it will be some time before the transition will be complete. Indeed, there is a strong case that, so long as development remains the major issue for the former colonies, postcoloniality will remain a significant factor of analysis, though not necessarily a helpful element of any solution.

This transitional configuration may be viewed as an underlying set of processes: the ongoing processes associated with global capitalist imperialism are the most fundamental determinants; then the specific dynamics of the relations with the former colonial powers come into play; overlying these are the new processes and relations creating links and potentialities outside and on top of the former frame.

It remains to consider the discourses, ideologies and theories currently available for use in this transitional period and to articulate the relations which exist at the present time between France and her former colonies, as well as their role in relation to change.

Postcolonial Theory and the Francophone World

There appears to have been considerable resistance to postcolonial theory in the francophone world. The theoretical production of the anglophone world in this area has often met with indifference in French-speaking countries, and especially in France itself. Jean-Marc Moura has claimed that the reasons for this are, on the one hand, the political or ideological tenor of much of the debate in postcolonial theory, coupled with the fact of its 'Anglo-Saxon' origins (see also Britton and Syrotinski 2001; Moura 2003: 191).[5] However, if one takes a broader view, it will be seen that *Francophone* work in this area has often been at the forefront of what might come under the umbrella of postcolonial theory. One only has to look at the contribution to this theory by writers such as Césaire, Fanon and Memmi, all products of French colonialism, as well as the fact that French theorists such as Lacan, Derrida and Foucault are generally considered to be central to the writings of many postcolonial critics.

Some of this reluctance has no doubt stemmed from a general unwillingness to engage with theories or models that derive from the English-speaking or 'Anglo-Saxon' world. There are nonetheless inherent problems with much of what passes as 'postcolonial theory' that could diminish its appeal.

These include the limitations of the field covered by this theory, the object of which is usually restricted to the field of literature and 'cultural studies'. Yet, at the same time, the parameters set by its designation as 'postcolonial' necessarily imply a close connection to the objective historical realities normally associated with 'colonialism' and its effects. This is not the study of literature or culture in a vacuum, but one that posits its rootedness in the real historical conditions that have impinged on it. Thus, there may also be problems with the way in which these objective conditions are reflected or represented in the theory, not least in the term 'postcolonial' itself.

One of these problems is the ongoing assumption common to much of this theorising that the former colonies continue to exist in a binary relation with the former colonising power. In other words, it assumes that the parameters of colonialism continue to operate, albeit in a different form. The fact that a critique of binarism often forms a substantial part of 'postcolonial theory' does not necessarily detract from this. Although such critiques posit the change of the relation's form from a confrontational, oppositional one to a hybridised interaction between more equal partners, they continue to posit a relation based on the same two terms, the (now former) coloniser and colonised.

Not only is much of what passes as 'postcolonial theory' in fact 'colonial theory', discussing and analysing the parameters of the colonial relation, as expressed in the literature and other cultural forms of the colonial period, chronologically defined. Even when the object of theory is post-independence literature or culture, it tends to apply what is, in reality, an updated version of the colonial model.

Moreover, the fact that the main development of postcolonial theory has been the work of intellectuals in the former settler colonies of the anglophone world, notably Australia, the United States and Canada, requires some explanation. Part of the reason may very well lie in the ambiguities of the situation of such intellectuals,

some of whom resent, or have an inferiority complex in relation to, the 'mother country', as well as some sense of guilt at their own situation as part of the colonising community, responsible for the subordination, ousting or extermination of the peoples indigenous to those lands or the enslavement and forcible transportation of other peoples. The contradictions that these circumstances may present to people of good will may well inspire a desire to reconfigure the parameters of the relationship between centre and periphery, to give themselves a more adequate role, as well as to reformulate the relationship between coloniser and colonised in terms that are easier to identify with.

At the same time, many of those working within the problematic of 'postcolonial theory' have their origins in the former colonies, but now form part of the postcolonial diaspora, through migration to the former metropolitan heartlands or the white settler colonies. For these, the problems that have to be addressed relate to the ambiguities attached not just to their objective situation as part of two antagonistic worlds but also to their subjective identities. It is no surprise that questions relating to hybridity, voice and representation have come to the fore.

The view of reality obtaining in the world view characteristic of postcolonialist discourse implies a number of elements, some of which are at odds with each other. On the one hand, it implies a comprehensive view of a multi-centred globalised capitalism, in which the old divisions of the colonial period no longer hold sway; indeed, it also tends to deny or attenuate these divisions retrospectively. At the same time, it elevates a specific phase of global capitalist imperialism, colonialism, into the whole or, at any rate, the main element of its view of history. Yet this is a view of history that is extraordinarily static. It allows for no new dynamic to replace the dynamic of struggle between coloniser and colonised. Thus, it is not only the end of conflict but also the end of progress and, indeed, of any movement forward.

There are clearly some theories, ideologies or value systems that tend to reinforce the status quo, whereas others are more helpful in mobilising the human and other resources necessary for change. I believe that there are two problematic areas that deserve particular attention. These relate, on the one hand, to issues surrounding the notion of hybridity and, on the other hand, those associated with questions of voice and representation.

Hybridity and Creolisation

It has indeed become one of the key tenets of postcolonial theory to emphasise the hybridity and heterogeneity of modern cultures. In essence, both the theorisation of *Francophonie* and the development of theories of *créolité* and *créolisation* represent attempts to move away from the notion of a binary divide, particularly as far as the relationship between France and its former colonies is concerned. Hybridity is, of course, not a modern concept. Indeed, it has played a role in a certain liberal tradition of openness and tolerance at least since Montaigne, who described the *'honnête homme'* as 'a hybrid man' (*'un homme mêlé'*) (Montaigne 1962: 964).

Edward Said also stressed the hybridity and heterogeneity of all cultures (Said 1993: xxix), not just in the postcolonial world, but also in the colonial period: 'To

ignore or otherwise discount the overlapping experience of Westerners and Orientals, the interdependence of cultural terrain in which colonizer and colonized coexisted and battled each other through projections as well as rival geographies, narratives, and histories, is to miss what is essential about the world in the past century' (Said 1993: xxii–xxiii). Moreover, he stressed that what he called this 'interdependence of cultural terrain' was not a recent phenomenon, but was set in motion by the processes of imperialism, which by 1914 saw 85 per cent of the earth's surface under the colonial domination (in one form or another) of the Western powers. Now, while Said stressed that this globalisation united the world in a single, interacting whole on a scale never seen before (Said 1993: 7), he is also clear, following Fanon, that this process was part and parcel of imperialism and cannot be separated from the Manichaean division that characterised the hegemony of the imperial powers.

Yet much of the postcolonial theorising about hybridisation, in spite of its real insights, nonetheless explicitly downplays the historical polarisation of the experience of colonisation and slavery, as well as the ongoing effects of its legacy in the present global divide. The following quotation from an essay by Michael Dash on Jacques-Stephen Alexis and Wilson Harris is given as just one, but an early, example of this tendency. The essay has valid and important things to say about the process of survival and the power of a counterculture of the imagination, as well as the emergence of an aesthetic based on literary, rather than political, values. However, referring to the engagement of 'Third World' writers with history, involving either a 'continuous and desperate protest' or the retreat into cynicism, he says:

> such attitudes to the continuum of history left out of account a significant and positive part of the history of the Third World. It made it difficult to see beyond the tragedy of circumstance to the complex processes of survival which the autochthonous as well as the transplanted cultures in the New World underwent. Such an investigation of the process of adaptation and survival in the oppressed cultures of the New World could well change the vision of the past which froze the New World writer in the prison of protest and reveal the colonial legacy as a positive and civilising force in spite of the brutality and privation which cloud this historical period …
>
> Of what importance can the conception of such an 'inner corrective' on history be to the contemporary writer? It means fundamentally that in the same way he can circumvent the ironies of history so can he avoid the negativity of pure protest. What can emerge is a literature of renascence – a literary aesthetic and reality based on the fragile emergence of the Third World personality from the privations of history. (M. Dash, 'Marvellous realism. The way out of négritude', *Caribbean Studies*, 13:4, 1974 in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1995b: 199–200)

Whatever the other intentions of the author here, there is a clear implication that the history of empire needs to be rewritten in a way that seeks to transcend its negative aspects and reveal it in a positive light. There are clear resonances with the thought

of Glissant. Yet, unlike some who have seized on theories of hybridity and hybridisation, *créolité* and *créolisation* to argue in favour of the end of resistance, Glissant's notion of an open-ended set of relations is not the prelude to the acceptance of Western hegemony, but goes hand in hand with a new conception of what resistance might be.

Although this is sometimes framed in somewhat obscure terms, it could be argued that this has been done deliberately. For, in the face of what Glissant has referred to as *'l'universel de la transparence'*, he proclaims the right to 'opaqueness' on behalf of the 'annihilated peoples', who meet the West's imposition of universal knowledge with the *'multiplicité sourde du Divers'*.[6]

On the one hand, this is a cultural resistance through writing and other art forms that takes as its basis the silence to which the 'annihilated peoples' have been doomed by the hegemony of the Same.[7] While this silence can be turned back on the perpetrators and used as a weapon against their domination, there comes a point for the writer when he wants to escape from this 'obscure web where silence finds its expression' (Glissant (1980)/1997: 15). He wants to go beyond what he calls the *'cri'*, the cry of complaint, the negative reaction to oppression, to forge a *'parole'*, to articulate the collective voice of a people emerging from silence.[8] This will entail a positive opening up to the world, becoming attuned to its rhythms, assuming the 'Relation', i.e. the Relation between the Same, the norms of universalist 'Western' thought, and the Diverse, the diversity of emerging peoples.[9] This is an attempt to find a new way forward, abandoning the futile search to become the Same by attempting to follow the path of assimilation, as well as remaining stuck, wallowing, in the fixed particularity of individual difference.

However, this is not just a new poetics. It extends beyond this to a revalorisation of the different forms of resistance that have operated historically in the Caribbean. Confiant takes up this theme, contrasting the different forms of 'silent and multifarious resistance that has taken place on the margins of the omnipotence of the plantation', in which the people themselves have engaged and which are contrasted with the more overt, spectacular types of revolutionary action and revolt, linked to organised political action, of the type favoured by Césaire and the old anticolonialist intellectual Left, following the example of Toussaint L'Ouverture or Lenin,[10] when they have not simply looked to assimilation with France.

The people have always engaged in real or metaphorical forms of *marronnage*, often unspectacular stratagems to circumvent authority, survival strategies ranging from growing their own vegetables in their own, often hidden, plots and organising parallel economic activities outside the plantation economy, to the more direct resistance of the runaway slaves and present-day forms of dogged and often inventive resistance, in which authority is not taken head on but is undermined by any number of forms of silent, disguised subversion, often engaged in on an individual basis.[11]

We have seen that Glissant's *'identité de la relation'* is underpinned by what remains the axiomatic assertion of a fundamental divide between the Same and the Diverse, or the West and the 'annihilated peoples'. An appreciation of the processes of *métissage* or hybridisation does not of itself invalidate an analysis of the real

divisions operating on the global plane or the need to oppose them. However, there is always an inherent tendency within this approach to veer towards the acceptance of the power relations and accommodation with them in the name of realism. There is the danger that resistance becomes ineffectual and tokenistic.

These notions have not been confined to the Caribbean. Indeed, there are many instances of the phenomenon of métissage or hybridisation in the Mediterranean world, as between the Maghreb and Europe in particular.[12] It is a question of the ideological value that is attributed to them, as in the case of *Afrique Latine* in the 1920s and 1930s, and the selectivity of an approach that highlights a common Mediterranean culture, for instance, giving it higher priority than other elements that are not primarily to do with identity issues. For, in any analysis of global political and economic realities, the Mediterranean must figure as one of the key dividing lines: between North and South, West and East, rich and poor, those who control global capitalism and those who are controlled by it. The notion of the two shores – *'les deux rives'* – is not to be dismissed lightly.

There is no doubt that there is real fluidity of movements, through migrations, travel, intellectual exchanges, as well as through the operation of the global forces of the capitalist economy, involving economic production, financial dealings and transactions, advertising in the global marketplace, cultural globalisation, all of which involve interactions and encounters, leading to the emergence of hybrid forms. However, the importance of such hybridity should not be overestimated at the cost of an analysis of the real power relations that continue to operate on the economic, social, political, military and cultural planes, reproducing and indeed intensifying the binary divide that is the mark of the relations between those who control the forces of global capitalism and those who are controlled by it.

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, we heard much about the death of ideology. However, it appears, on the contrary, that ideology is very much alive and kicking and, in accordance with one of the key characteristics of ideology, assuming the mantle of common sense or natural truth. When used as an absolute principle, with assumed moral value, rather than as a tool of analysis, theories of the processes involved in the creation of hybrid forms can become something of a misplaced crusade. For there is nothing inherently superior about a hybrid or creolised entity. Value is a matter to be added by a moral or political agenda and will depend on the particular context and set of circumstances.

It is often the case that notions of hybridity have been assumed within an ideological stance, which would have us believe that there are no fundamental differences and oppositions any more, that everything is on a par, of equal value, and that the divisions between 'us' and 'them' are no longer credible, if they ever were. The history of the colonial period is rewritten to emphasise mutual influences and interactions and to downplay the binary dialectic of opposites as a figure of the colonial relations of domination and struggle.

At the same time, this has involved a new emphasis on resistance by the colonised to the colonising powers to mitigate the one-sided nature of the domination. This in itself is no bad thing; resistance had indeed been an ongoing

phenomenon in a variety of forms and re-evaluation here is no doubt long overdue. However, what is somewhat suspect is, first, the customary restriction of this process of re-evaluation to the cultural domain, whilst instances of political or military resistance are not highlighted in the same way. Indeed, there is often an implicit, or explicit, critique of the problematic of the anticolonial liberation struggles and the binary oppositions that underpinned them.

The corollary of this is that this cultural resistance is thereby elevated to the status of prime factor in the colonial/postcolonial relationship in a move that inevitably downplays the ongoing reality of colonial/postcolonial domination and exploitation. It is all very well to conclude that colonial society was as profoundly affected by the colonial experience as were the colonised. The reality of the experience was, however, quite strikingly different for each of the sides and this remains the case in the present divided world. The emphasis on two-way influence inevitably downplays the reality of the power relations involved, as does the one-sided glorification of resistance to imperialism, which misses the point of the reality of empire and its ongoing survival in new forms and with new protagonists.

In a sense, some of the problems of this approach are related to the object of postcolonial studies, which has tended to concentrate on one extreme of what is a wide spectrum of very different experience. At one end of this spectrum, it takes as its object developments relating to some of the most fluid sections of global society, in which reality is characterised for large numbers of individuals by their experience of transient, migratory phenomena and a complex existence based on fluctuation, interaction and a heady cultural brew of heterogeneous elements and relations. At the other end, there are the modern-day, largely ignored wretched of the earth, existing in societies that are often locked in a mostly repetitive cycle of grinding poverty and exploitation and for whom the binary divide is still very much the defining factor. For these societies, which may not even have reached modernity, some of the wildest fancies of the postcolonial and the postmodern have little to offer, to say the least.

These two poles appear to reflect a new duality of the 'postcolonial' experience: on the one hand, the mobility that is characteristic of those who belong to the mobile diaspora, for whom theories associated with hybridity and *métissage* may indeed have much to offer as part of an explanatory theory of their own cultural experience; on the other hand, the immobility that is characteristic of the vast majority stuck in poverty, squalor and disease, and for whom manipulation of crude identity politics is often the basic fare on offer.

In both cases, history appears to have come to a standstill. It is a world in stasis, where real possibilities of struggle to bring about change are discounted and discredited. Yet the idealised visions of a hybridised world, like the rhetoric of *Francophone* discourse, come up against two stark realities: on the one hand, the real consequences of the global divide on the lives of the people of the 'majority world'; on the other, the barriers that are erected in the 'minority world'. These include not just the concrete barriers set up at external frontiers to keep out those who attempt to flee from poverty and persecution, but also the internal barriers operating within

societies to maintain distinctions of class, caste, religion, race, gender and culture, and which are shored up by institutions, ideologies and political movements, not just of the extreme Rght, but also by the mainstream political consensus.

Representation and Voice

None of the above is intended as a critique of theories of hybridity and hybridisation per se; it is a case of the ideological uses and abuses to which they may be put. This is also apparent in the case of certain 'theoretical' excesses that attempt to deny even the possibility of a voice to those who are exploited and oppressed.

On the one hand, an uncritical adoption of hybridity as an all-embracing, organising principle of the colonial/postcolonial world leads inexorably to the denial of a voice of their own to the most oppressed, who are presumed incapable of existing in an autonomous sphere. They are doomed not to exclusion but to inescapable inclusion within the interrelations of hybridity, where self-expression is conceived in terms of imitating the ideas and behaviour of those who are most powerful. Although hybridity is seen as the possibility of reciprocal interaction and influence, the realities of the balance of power preclude this in all but the most exceptional cases. Where the theorists of national liberation saw the re-appropriation of the voice of the enslaved and the colonised as a necessary step in the struggle, this has become a problematic area in postcolonial theory, inevitably linked to problems and issues surrounding the question of representation and the right to representation.

One of the most extreme articulations of these issues has been through the controversy provoked by the issue of the 'subaltern' voice and, in particular, an essay by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak ?' (Spivak 1988), where it was not even a question of the right to a voice but its very possibility for those who are categorised as 'subaltern'. Spivak took as her example an Indian widow attempting to commit suttee and discussed whether this could be interpreted as an attempt at self-representation. Her conclusion was that her position as subaltern excluded her from the hegemonic discourse as a discursive subject, where she could only be defined as Other, object of the discourse. It is this that defines her status as subaltern. As such, the subaltern is condemned to silence. For her to gain a voice, she would have to lose her subaltern status by joining, if it were possible, those elites who shared in the hegemonic culture, albeit as junior partners, for ever deprived of an 'authentic' voice and doomed to mimicry of the hegemonic discourse, behaviour and culture.

Spivak has claimed that she has been grossly misinterpreted over this essay, particularly by critics who chose to argue that her position denied absolutely any possibility of voice to the subaltern, whereas her case is that the subaltern who speaks is no longer subaltern. The fact remains that in her theory hegemonic discourse is all-encompassing and no space is allowed for dissident discourse. Even those critics, like Homi Bhabha (Bhabha 1994), who argue that mimicry of the dominant discourse may have a subversive, transformational effect on that discourse and even, possibly, on the relations existing between the dominant and the dominated are not proposing a theory of effective resistance, since the dominated will stay for ever blocked in the

hegemonic relation, whatever tinkering may take place at the level of discourse. Indeed, it is a step backwards compared with Fanon's interpretation and rejection of the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the servant, which he rejected as irrelevant to the struggle of the colonised for their own autonomous space.

For all the insights that subsequent theorists, working in the anglophone or the francophone world, and even in France itself, may have had into the actual workings of hegemonic power systems and discourses and their deconstruction on the theoretical plane, both during the colonial period and thereafter, there is little here that is going to be of much help to those wishing to develop meaningful strategies of change.

Before we conclude, we shall make a short detour back into history to discuss the very different place that India has occupied in the French postcolonial memory, not least for the light we believe this will throw on current French strategy and discourse within the francophone world and further afield, in a situation where it has similarly to assume that of a subordinate, junior partner.

India without the English

French perceptions of India have been profoundly marked by the history of rivalry with the British for control of the country and the early relegation of French aspirations to a very minor, subordinate role in its colonisation. When the French lost out to the British in the battle for hegemony in India in 1763, they were left with only the handful of trading posts, famously enumerated in the song recorded in 1957 by Juliette Greco, which, for all its suggestiveness of the woman who had *'un Chandernagor de classe', 'deux Yanaon ronds et frais', 'le Karikal mal luné', 'un petit Mahé secret', 'le Pondichéry facile'*, is a lament for their loss.[13] Of these, Chandernagore had been the most important commercially, although Pondicherry had come to assume greater importance as the administrative capital of French India and today appears to have retained far more signs of the French presence in terms of architectural and cultural residues. This presence was maintained until 1949, with the formal transfer of the territories in 1954 to the new Republic of India. Most were then grouped in the Union Territory of Pondicherry, in spite of the geographical separation of its constituent parts. Chandernagore, however, was an exception, opting to become part of the Indian state of West Bengal.

The existence of the French enclaves throughout the time of the British presence in India gave France a quite original position, not least through the deliberate exploitation of the mobilising power of their ideology of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' to influence the Indians to rise up against the British overlords. This was a process that went back to the time of the French Revolution, and even before, and there is no doubt that some Indians found these ideas appealing. However, once the possibility of France becoming the major colonial power had been excluded, the French presence became a residual, marginalised one in relation to the dominant British rule. On the one hand, it inspired a certain resentful nostalgia for what might have been in much of the writing of the colonial period, most notably in Pierre Loti's

L'Inde (sans les Anglais) (1903/1992), which was translated soon after and published in 1906, not only in an English but also in a Bengali version, translated by Jyotirindranath Tagore, brother of the Bengali writer and Nobel prize-winner Rabindranath, and published in Calcutta.[14] For the subversive uses to which the French presence could be put were also an important part of the picture. Thus the French enclaves provided a sanctuary for Indians involved in the independence struggle, notably Aurobindo Ghosh, who sought refuge in Chandernagore in 1910 before settling in Pondicherry and founding the ashram to which he gave his name. There was a thriving French-language press in Chandernagore and a French-language paper, *Le Petit Bengali*, was published from 1880. This provided an outlet for much anticolonial material published in the first half of the twentieth century.

The tendency to portray India as the absolute Other of the Western, as represented by the British, has been characteristic of French readings of India. Without the constraints of official colonial policy to contend with, the dominant French view of India has been an extreme form of orientalism, without the accretions of assimilationism typical of much of French colonial policy elsewhere. In 1967, Louis Malle was still portraying India in this way, with his series of films, *Phantom India*, recalling with its title Loti's *Fantôme d'Orient* (1892/1990). The fundamental problematic of Malle's view of India was the orientalist gaze, which he assumed fully despite the discomfort and malaise that it provoked. It was the gaze of the Western outsider, looking at an Other, who not only was represented as the West's absolute antithesis but was stated to be intrinsically unknowable. As Malle said in an interview with Philip French, 'India was impossible to understand for a foreigner – it was so opaque' (French 1993: 90). India is thus presented as the absolute Other: 'Everything in India – their way of life, relationships, family structure, spiritual needs – is so opposed to what we in the West are used to and take for granted, that living there constantly provokes your mind, and your heart' (French 1993: 91).

The experience of India had a profound effect on Malle himself, which he likened to being 'brainwashed': 'India was the perfect tabula rasa: it was just like starting from scratch' (French 1993: 91). In particular, the rational approach is dismissed as totally inapplicable to India. Malle tried this way:

> I also met a number of Westernised intellectuals and artists and, like a good Frenchman, I tried to understand Indian culture and Indian religions rationally. Of course, in a matter of days I realised how silly it was. Indians have such a completely different approach to everything – for instance, how they deal with death. The Indian way is the opposite of our Judaeo-Christian tradition. (French 1993: 91)

He then rejected it in favour of an approach that was content to just observe from the outside, accepting the status of the film-maker as that of the ultimate *voyeur*. When his cameraman Etienne Becker complained that the objects of their gaze were looking at them and asked Malle to tell them not to look, Malle refused, noting that they had every right to look at them since they were the ones who were the intruders:

> And Etienne said, 'But they're all looking at me, it's not right, tell them not to look.' I said, 'Why should I tell them not to look at us since we're intruders. First, I don't speak their language; just a few of them speak a little English. We're the intruders, disturbing them. They don't know what we're doing, so it's perfectly normal that they look at us. To tell them not to look at us, it's the beginning of *mise-en-scène*.' It's what I resent about so many documentaries where film-makers arrive from somewhere and start by telling the people, 'Pretend we are not here.' It is the basic lie of most documentaries, this naive *mise-en-scène*, the beginning of distortion of the truth. Very quickly I realised that these looks at the camera were both disturbing and true, and we should never pretend we weren't intruders. So we kept working that way. (French 1993: 93)

Although he accepts the right of the observed to return the gaze in their turn, none of this questions the right of the observer to direct his gaze on the people concerned in the first place. In a number of cases, the objects of the gaze, particularly the village women in the fields at the beginning of the film, are manifestly uncomfortable with it and regard it as an imposition, although Malle claims that he did not film when people did not want them to or, at least, when they were able to get the message across the assumed absolute communication gap.

As with Loti and others, Malle steps outside the frame of the relation of the major colonising nation to the colonised, to adopt the position of the third person, that of the French in India. It is emphasised at different points in the film that not only had India remained untouched by the experience of British colonisation under the Raj, except for a minority elite and political class, whose views were dismissed as irrelevant to India's needs, but the English, as ever, had failed to understand its essence.

When divested of its romantic mysticism, the French perspective on India can emerge as a model for the current *Francophone* discourse, where the French, or *Francophone*, way is presented as a subversive alternative to the dominant American hegemony. This had already happened to some extent in relation to French colonial involvement in Indochina, where the French involvement in a triangulated relationship with the United States, which took over their role as dominant colonial power, allowed them to appear less tainted and even to take the side of the underdog. In their role as former, now subordinate, colonial power, France was well placed to play the role of honest broker in the Vietnam peace negotiations, which took place in Paris from 1968 to 1973.

Within France, on the other hand, there has been some soul-searching about the role of France on the global plane. This is often described in terms of a malaise, as by Jon Henley (*Guardian*, 27 March 1999), who writes of the *malaise* as 'a growing doubt about France's place in the global order, a fear that in a technologising, Anglicising, homogenising world, as Europe merges into a single economic and political bloc and Anglo-American culture sweeps the planet, France may not be able to remain France. It is stuck, the anxiety is, in its glorious past.' So he quotes the political scientist, Pierre Birnbaum, also analysing the problem in terms of a failure to modernise ('Our problem is that we have not found the way to modernise while

preserving our imagined community'), as well as Jean Baudrillard, who makes clear the alternative mission of France ('We want to be an alternative, to show that if nobody resists America any more, at least we will. But because we are not sure what model to embody, we tend to offer simply inertia').

Things appear to have moved on since then and France offers a number of different models adapted to different constituencies. At home, there is little sign of relaxation of the dominant mode of Republican secularism, which continues to promote an unyielding homogeneity and has been reinforced by the 2004 law on secularism in education (see Chapter 10) outlawing Muslim headscarves and other visible religious signs or apparel in public schools. On the world stage, France has continued to present itself as the champion of other, alternative, solutions, in which to challenge, at least through its discourse, American power on the world stage. The discourse of 'multipolarity', in which France argues against the hegemony of a single planetary superpower, has been revitalised through the rhetoric and actions of Jacques Chirac, taking up de Gaulle's mantle in this respect. At the same time, in Africa, France continues to pursue a special relationship in what it regards as its prime area of influence in the world today, along with the Arab world.

The French Ideology

To sum up, we shall return to the specific arena of the francophone world, where, as we have seen, the French discourse associated with *Francophonie*, with multipolarity and the defence of diversity on the global plane, can have considerable appeal, not least through its subversive pretensions. France, particularly under the presidency of Jacques Chirac, has appeared to grasp the significance of the new developments and to have found a way of turning them to its own advantage. Again, this is above all a question of finding the right rhetoric, the right discourse, using buzzwords such as 'multipolarity' to reflect the new scenario and the mood it has evoked, or rather reinventing the Gaullist discourse of the 1960s and giving it new clothes. The promotion of multipolarity in the world may be light years away from the universalist rhetoric of the colonial and immediate postcolonial period. In essence, however, it serves the same function, which is to promote and preserve the influence and global power of France in the modern world. As we have seen in Chapter 7, the attractions are there for the former French colonies, as well as for countries that have no colonial connection, such as those countries in Eastern Europe that have been under the domination of a single power bloc for too long not to appreciate the benefits of having several baskets in which to place their eggs. However, the impact of this 'French ideology' is limited, first by the fact of its own contradictions and, secondly, by the fact that it remains a discourse.

The contradictions have evolved over the course of time, along with the content of the discourse, to fit in with changing circumstances and strategies. At the present time, the main contradiction remains the discrepancy between the message of pluralism and diversity that has gone out to the wider world, and the determined defence of a supposed universal homogeneity at home in the Hexagon or in the DOM-TOM.

As a discourse, it suffers from the obvious disadvantages of being precisely that, a discourse. As such, it has no pretensions to the status of theory and does not claim to provide any instruments to further knowledge and understanding of the facts and underlying processes pertaining to the present reality or any strategies for change. It can and does propose a vision and a framework for a certain type of international relations, in which idealism ranks highly. However, its real force is in its capacity for self-representation as a vehicle of subversion of the hegemonic discourse of the US and its allies. It is largely through the force of its discourse and the associated credibility and prestige it maintains in the world at large that France has the capacity to punch above its weight on the international scene.

Can we therefore conclude that there is a specific French dimension to postcoloniality?

Clearly, the specific history of France's role in the process of global capitalist imperialism has left its mark in the modern world on its former colonies and on France itself. In particular, the way in which the relations between the metropole and the colonies were articulated in colonial policy and ideology, as well as the rationalisations of the whole enterprise, has been marked by characteristic forms and features quite peculiar to the French sphere. So, at this level, there clearly has been and continues to be a specifically French dimension to postcoloniality, notwithstanding the underlying processes that are global in nature and scope and the characteristics common to the various imperial undertakings and the challenges to them.

However, this specificity does not just derive from past history. It is also a demarcating feature in terms of the ways in which France and its former colonies have found new ways of articulating their relations in the postcolonial world today. There is also a very specific dimension to the problematic areas where the effects of postcoloniality are at their most conflictual, most notably those concerning the postcolonial diaspora within metropolitan France itself.

As for the future, any prognosis is necessarily speculative in nature. What we have seen as the beginnings of the transition away from postcoloniality may develop at a quicker or slower pace. However, there are two factors that seem to be reasonably certain.

One is that development will undoubtedly remain the primary issue for the foreseeable future as far as the majority of the former French colonies are concerned. Given the global nature of the underlying processes involved, as well as the necessity for solutions with, at least in part, a global dimension, there is likely to be a dilution of the particular relations that have their roots in the history of the French Empire. Solutions are likely to come from an intensification of efforts at the level of the local economies and societies, as well as through greater regional cooperation and action at the level of the basic structures of the global economy and power structures. All of this means that there will probably be a tendency for the French dimension to be marginalised.

The other factor is that France will almost certainly do everything in its power to avoid this marginalisation. While the ongoing development of the ideological armoury is certainly on the cards, it is not possible to predict what other means may be brought into play. It is reasonable, however, to conclude that it is highly unlikely that the French dimension to postcoloniality will fade into insignificance in the near future.

Notes

1. 'C'est la même chose dans le giron français: il y a un Etat qui ne marche pas comme on voudrait qu'il marche, alors on envoie des blindés faire un tour. Je ne peux pas accepter cela! L'Afrique ne peut pas accepter cela longtemps' (Laurent Gbagbo, quoted in *Le Monde*, 16 December 2004).

2. 'L'Europe a acquis une telle vitesse folle, désordonnée, qu'elle échappe aujourd'hui à tout conducteur, à toute raison et qu'elle va dans un vertige effroyable vers des abîmes, dont il vaut mieux le plus rapidement s'éloigner' (Fanon (1961)/1987: 236).

3. pas un des hommes réunis à Bandoeng qui ne fût conscient de l'immense importance de l'Europe dans l'histoire de l'humanité et de la richesse de sa contribution aux progrès de la civilisation. Ce qui a été condamné à Bandoeng, ça n'a pas été la civilisation européenne, ça a été la forme intolérable qu'au nom de l'Europe certains hommes ont cru devoir donner aux relations qui devaient normalement s'instaurer entre l'Europe et les peuples non européens.

    Eh bien, si un événement mérite le nom d'historique, c'est bien celui-là … Pour bien en comprendre la portée, je vous demande de réfléchir à ces deux dates: en 1885, l'Europe se réunissait à Berlin pour se partager le monde; en 1955, soixante-dix ans plus tard, le monde s'est réuni à Bandoeng pour signifier à l'Europe que le temps de l'empire européen est fini et d'avoir pour le plus grand bien de la civilisation, à rentrer dans l'ordre commun. (Césaire 1956: 1367–68).

4. 'L'ordre était parfaitement observé. Ces femmes et ces vieillards, longtemps habitués au désordre, apprenaient la discipline. De bonne grâce, ils s'y soumettaient; le nationalisme, en quelques mois, les avait habitués à l'ordre, et avait ouvert leur esprit sur le monde moderne' (Ghazi 1956: 1357).

5. 'Ni la francophonie littéraire ni la théorie postcoloniale ne sont des notions claires en France, l'une parce qu'elle a été engagée dans trop de débats idéologiques, la seconde en raison d'une origine anglo-saxonne assez récente qui ne lui a pas encore permis de s'acclimater dans notre recherche universitaire' (Moura 1999: 1).

6. Car la tentative d'approcher une réalité tant de fois occultée ne s'ordonne pas tout de suite autour d'une série de clartés. Nous réclamons le droit à l'opacité. Par quoi notre tension pour tout dru exister rejoint le drame planétaire de la Relation: l'élan des peuples néantisés qui opposent aujourd'hui à l'universel de la transparence, imposé par l'Occident, une multiplicité sourde du Divers. (Glissant (1980)/1997: 14).

7. 'nous sommes en marge, nous nous taisons. Mais tout ce mouvement fait un boucan de silences dans nos têtes' (Glissant (1980)/1997: 15).

8. 'Quitter le cri, forger la parole. Ce n'est pas renoncer à l'imaginaire ni aux puissances souterraines, c'est armer une durée *nouvelle*, ancrée aux émergences des peuples' (Glissant (1980)/1997: 28).

9. 'Du cri fixe d'ici, déroule une parole aride, difficile. Accorde ta voix à la durée du monde. Sors de la peau de ton cri. Entre en peau du monde par tes pores. Soleil à vif' (Glissant (1980)/1997: 27).

10. 'la résistance ouverte, spectaculaire, à la révolte de type Spartacus ou à la Révolution de type Toussaint-Louverture ou Lénine' (Confiant 1996: 147; see also p.148 and Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant 1989: 55).

11. 'un marronnage quotidien obstiné, silencieux, masqué mais inébranlable de l'espèce de chape de plomb qui pèse sur la Martinique depuis trois cent cinquante ans' (Confiant 1996: 171).

12. To quote just one example from the first editorial by Nadia Khouri-Dagher in *Yasmina*, a magazine for Maghrebian women: 'Nous savons aujourd'hui que nous pouvons appartenir, socialement et affectivement, à la fois à deux univers qui ne sont opposés que pour ceux qui connaissent mal l'un des deux' (*Le Monde*, 17 October 2002).

13.   Elle avait, elle avait le Pondichéry acceuillant.
        Aussitôt, aussitôt c'est à un nouveau touriste
        Qu'elle fit voir son comptoir, sa flore, sa géographie.
        Pas question, dans ces conditions,
        De revoir un jour les Comptoirs de l'Inde. (Juliette Greco, Chandernagor, recorded by Fontana 1957).

14. See also Farrère (1935)/1992; Droit 1989; Clément 1993; Assayag 1999; Airault 2000. For an extensive bibliography of such material, see Granger et al. 2002.

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Index