DISCOURSE AND THE NORTH AFRICAN BERBER IDENTITY

an inquiry into authority

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Society is replete with authoritative voices. Proceeding from figureheads such as political or religious leaders, from social fixtures such as education systems and economic structures, or from texts whether sacred, academic, or literary, these voices—often imperceptibly—determine our relationship to the world around us. By creating and maintaining discourses that shape our notion of what is natural, logical, and privileged, authority permits the creation of hierarchy.

This seductive condition passes from one society to the others it intersects, and is inherited by even those most subjugated because of it. Under the rule of French colonization, Moroccans and Algerians were forced to adapt their self-identities to the one designated to them by the French; one that, in form and in practice, yielded racism and repression. The burden of this discourse was thrown off as a result of the Algerian revolution and subsequent decolonization, but the condition persisted, as the new Arab authorities assumed the responsibility for the dissemination of hierarchical discourse. The pursuit of national identity was termed ‘Arabization,’ thus excluding from collective redefinition the Berbers, a people indigenous to the region. Their language and culture have encountered repression and discrimination in the decades following independence, despite their prevalence and historical presence in both countries.

While the Berbers have been the focus of Western academic reports, ethnographies, and efforts at preservation, their position as ever the ‘studied’ reinforces their position as one constantly bound to be defined by another with more authority than they. The reason for this dynamic is, however, as arbitrary as the identities of the humans that comprise the categories of ‘studier’ and ‘studied,’ ‘colonizer’ and ‘colonized’; all categories are composed of human beings, just as all discourse is created by humans, and all authority is ordained and maintained by humans. By attaching a face and the constraints of social context to the capacity of individuals to define the reality of other individuals, I hope to offer the means to doubting, and eventually dismantling, authority.
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PREFACE.

This project first developed out of my response to my extended stay in France, from September 2004 to July 2005. I had anticipated a country defined by its distinctive and time-established culture as the backdrop for a socially progressive agenda. What I found instead was a country rife with confusion and paradox, seeking to project an image of itself that is culturally outdated, or compromised with an Americanization of their distinctiveness, and is socially fictive—in pursuit of social betterment, prone to striking in response to the slightest injustice, but largely ignorant to their most obvious flaws. Foremost among these oversights is of France’s ethnic diversity, particularly its Arab population. This population is largely invisible in the country’s national self-projection, though it has comprised an increasing proportion of the French population since the establishment of the colonial relationship between France and the North African countries in the 1800s.

However, the exact figures on this subject cannot be presented here because they do not exist. The state of France does not publish statistics on ethnic or national origin, preferring instead to be “ethnically color-blind.” Its policy towards minorities is to treat them as equal citizens, with the objective of assimilating them into French society. In this beneficent model, descendents of immigrants can “take advantage of the education system and generous welfare state,” 1 embracing and experiencing the French motto that inspired the celebrated liberation of the third estate in 1789: liberté, égalité, fraternité (freedom, equality, brotherhood).

Obviously, the reality of this ideal takes on less-than-ideal form. In “emphasizing French identity above all […] discrimination has flourished behind the oft-stated ideals, leaving immigrants and their French-born offspring increasingly isolated in government-subsidized apartment blocks to face high unemployment and dwindling hope for the future.” 2 While the pretense of achieving ‘frenchness’ persists, those citizens without a ‘French’ face are forgotten in the imagining of the national identity. This forgetting happens first in the national discourse, disseminated through social and cultural channels

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1 Bremner (2005)
2 Smith (2005)
such as history books, literature, art, and even the media, which has been virtually void of all but ‘French’ faces. It then manifests itself in practical ways, as the forgotten are literally pushed to the periphery, suffering from their lack of access to economic and occupational stability.

I watched the pervasiveness of this national experience during my time abroad. A friend of Moroccan descent, once turned away without explanation from the entrance of a dance club we had frequented together, was then refused entry upon each subsequent visit. His expression communicated embarrassment, anger, and sadness, but never confusion as we endured these confrontations, because they were common to all of his Arab friends at the same club. Another friend, an American, when robbed of his cell phone, was questioned by the police as to the nature of the crime and the identity of the criminal. When he could not supply a satisfactory description, the policewoman suggested physical qualities, beginning with, “Was he Arab?” The presumption reinforced in both of these situations is of the authenticity of racist stereotypes. Present here in business and in the punitive system, these examples betray the institutionalization of racism.

The destructive manifestations of a constructed discourse took on a more violent form in October and November 2005 when the suburbs of French metropolises were ignited with car burnings. Arab youths, incensed at what they perceived to be the martyring of two of their own to the societal bounds that refused them a voice in the shaping of their own reality, burned 4,551 cars in an eleven-day period. The Parisian neighborhood where the two boys were electrocuted on a fence as they attempted to evade police officers had felt the pressure of a recent anti-crime campaign on the part of the French Interior Minister that espoused “zero tolerance.” The week before the riots, this administrator had vowed to “‘wage a war without mercy’ against delinquents in the suburbs,”3 a war that featured “frequent police checks of French Arabs in poor neighborhoods,”4 and which served to further alienate the young people from the society.

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3 Sciolino (2005)
4 Smith (2005)
that already expressed a systematic disinterest in whatever stake they may have held in the French national identity.

The erasure of this voice and those faces created what for me was the tragic discrepancy between the France I had awaited and the France I discovered. I felt deceived to have bought into the projected image of frenchness, to have instead encountered an evolved, rich, and more colorful France, and to have realized that this image was nonetheless obscured in favor of an idea carefully maintained and virtually imaginary. The nonexistence of this ‘other’ population is reinforced wherever French literature is regarded as sacred and French history is extolled. ‘They’ are not a part of those histories, discourses, or imaginations; ‘they’ can also be tamed, through police control and threats of deportation when they threaten the viability of these maintained realities.

But what of ‘they’ and ‘their’ identities? What of the reconciliation between their self-identification and the need for a national identity, if such a need exists? “France just discovered that she had Arab and Black children,” my roommate from France, also of Moroccan descent, wrote me in an email as she reflected in November on her country’s trauma. “Before the cars burned, they thought that we were just a kind of strange, violent and foreign people living in poor conditions, certainly by our fault because we were not trying to ‘integrate’ ourselves in this fucking society. Why do you have to ‘integrate’ French society when you are French?”5 Her comments question what it means to be ‘French,’ officially versus holistically.

Her anger echoes that of all who first recognized the disconnect between these two notions of belonging in the wake of the riots. The existence of such a disconnect has alienated compatriots from each other, as well as from the identity they supposed was theirs. "The republic deals with citizens, not with individuals. But we're not citizens. We don't know what we are. Not Arab or west African, but not French either. We're unrecognized and unremembered," one person expressed, grieving their country’s ability to forget them. He continued, “No wonder people rebel.”6

5 Nahhal (2005)
6 Bertossian, Christophe in Henley (2005)
I spent last year among the unremembered; I have spent this year wondering whether and how it is possible to remember and recognize the forgotten and ignored parts of histories. Is rebellion the inevitable course to bringing oneself to the fore of national imagination? This is my reflection on these topics.
INTRODUCTION.

The Maghreb is a common term for the region in Northwest Africa that borders the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert. In Arabic, ‘Maghreb’ means ‘west’; though it also refers specifically to Morocco, the westernmost country in North Africa, it has also become Western Europe’s way of designating the entire region. The area’s geography factors into its consideration as an entity separate from the rest of the African continent it shares, the Asian one it borders, and the European one with which it has a history of cultural and commercial exchange. The Desert and the Sea provide it with the natural means to develop a character of its own while remaining accessible to all of these neighboring societies.

In other words, the people indigenous to the Maghreb have developed a culture and language quite apart from those found elsewhere in the world because their remoteness permitted for coherence amongst the various tribes of this vast region. However, the fact of its proximity to Spain, Africa, and the Middle East eventually brought more than passers-by and merchants: the Maghreb and its diverse kingdoms have been mined for millennia for subjects, converts, and participants in systems that, in the name of expansion, had reached all the way to their homeland. The people of the Maghreb have therefore witnessed the steady flow of cultural trends, political systems, religions, and languages that temporarily become established as the standard. Meanwhile, the Maghrebens themselves have historically retreated further towards the uninhabitable lands of the deserts and the mountains as farmers and nomads, or taken to the sea as pirates, in an effort to preserve their way of life in lands repeatedly ceded to the power of another.

Wave after wave of conquerors, missionaries, and colonizers have entered their domain. These groups, from the Phoenicians in the seventh century BCE, to the Romans in the first century BCE, the Muslims in the seventh century, the French in the nineteenth century, and most recently the influx of Western tourists and academics, have in turn established their regimes and imposed their social and political structures, their religions, and their languages on those indigenous to the land. Despite the nearly constant stream
of cultures and societies that have ruled over theirs, the original Maghrebens have maintained a culture and, significantly, a language distinct from that of their dominators.

It is important to note that what we know about the history of these people comes almost entirely out of the literature of their dominators. Lacking a written form of their language, only those Maghrebens who have mastered a language outside of their native tongue can represent this group to a wider audience. Thus, their narrative has been constructed and maintained by outsiders or in the language of the outsider. This narrative presents this indigenous group as easily accommodating of outside regimes, accepting Islam during the Umayyad dynasty and praised for their natural tendency towards democratic rule by the French colonizers. Their language, their rural way of life, their fundamental spirituality, and their folktale traditions, however, are never compromised because of this adaptability, according to the way their story is told.

This popular narrative controlled and retold by dominators has shaped the collective identity of the Maghrebens, but further, the name that refers to this group has been designated by their foreign rulers. They have become known as ‘Berbers,’ the origin of which is contested, but is related either to the Latin word barbaros, used by Greek conquerors to designate foreigners and those with a different language and culture, or to the Arabic word berbera, used by Muslim conquerors meaning a mix of unintelligible sounds. In both situations, the identity of the Berbers was assigned by way of comparison to another culture, notably the one foreign to their own land. This term, despite carrying something of a pejorative connotation, is now generally used to identify this group.

Whether the Berbers are actively participating in the retention of the distinctiveness ascribed to them by this maintained discourse is the subject of this project. The capacity to assume an authoritative role in the construction of one’s reality requires that one gain access to the media that produce it, a production referred to throughout this paper with phrases like ‘cultural hegemony,’ ‘common sense,’ ‘discourse,’ or ‘constructed identity.’ The means of gaining this access, as the history of the region

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1 Ennaji (2005), p. 71
2 Khaldun in Shah-Kazemi (1997), p. 131
demonstrates, are often violent in nature, are always material, and may only result in a reproduction of an authoritative, hierarchical system.

Chapter One presents this process as it occurred between the French colonizers and the colonized residing in Morocco and Algeria. To overthrow the French colonial discourse that had defined the colonized peoples as their ‘other’ and as subjects deserving of their lower position in the hierarchy, Algerians resorted to a well-organized and bloody war. The French responded with torture, their means of preserving a discourse that allowed them power. Although the Algerians gained their independence, as did Morocco a few years prior, the way it was expressed suggested that the new authorities would perpetuate the notion of an ‘other’ that they could justifiably subjugate.

Chapter Two reveals the continued violence, though expressed culturally and ideologically rather than physically, of attaining and securing the capacity to create discourse. The Arabs forbid and discriminated against the time-honored Berber language and culture. This was done with the objective of fortifying their own national identity, but in the process it has begun to threaten these Berber treasures with their obsolescence. Efforts are underway amongst academics and policy-makers in the region to cultivate nationwide recognition and appreciation of Berber’s complicity with their own cultures and to preserve the language. These academic and authoritative attentions, however, are suspect, for Chapters One and Two demonstrate how the hand of authority does a violence in the act in defining and enacting those definitions.

Chapter Three goes on to discuss this academic authority, specifically in how it has treated the Berbers. Although texts most often portray the Berbers in a favorable light, reiterating the narrative presented above, their rhetoric betrays a less objective agenda in an otherwise academic work. Taking into consideration the social context in which works were created affords them appropriate worth, for their content is perhaps more useful to illuminate the context of the author rather than that of the Berber. But as texts are often considered an authority, their function is thus an often-unrecognized force in the shaping of popular discourse about them.

Chapter Four continues in this vein, reiterating the human quality of discourse. Because it is created in material ways, such as with texts and policy, discourse can always be analyzed and considered in its true form: with a human face. By including this
project’s contribution to an authoritative textual corpus, I acknowledge the power of text to change discourse, and how its inevitable biases, when conscious to the author, can be harnessed to create a desired outcome for those whom the discourse affects.
CHAPTER ONE.
The identity crises of colonization.

The French presence in North Africa speaks to centuries of profoundly complicated relations. Defined by their subjection to France, either as a colony as was the case in Algeria, or as a protectorate as in Morocco and Tunisia, North Africans have been compelled to adore, resent, resist, and capitalize upon the legacy of the French presence, both as it occurred and since the decolonization and nation-building of the twentieth century redefined their relation to France and the rest of the world. Each response to the imposed imperial presence occurs as a result of the dynamic created out of the colonial situation. This dynamic allows a colonial power to dehumanize and objectify its subjects at the same time that it ushers them into the dominant political and economical paradigms in which they may later have the opportunity to participate, and from which they may benefit.

Because of the double-edged nature of their interactions with their colonial dominators, the former colonies are indebted to them for their role in crafting the identities and determining the welfare of these now-independent nation-states in a globalized world. The French colonists first settled in Algeria in 1830; the memory of living Algerians thus does not extend back to a time in which their identities were not implicated in the colonial experience. Further, the bitter and violent, six-year-long battle for independence occurring from 1956-62 survives in the consciousness of those who lived to witness and fight in it, functioning as another burden upon the fledgling collective identity of Algerian citizens. This identity, nuanced for the trauma impressed upon its very foundation, cannot be discussed nor its future assessed without a sensitive inquiry into the nature of its formation.

This chapter serves as a guide to such an inquiry. In cultivating an appreciation for the circumstances that shaped the encounter between the colonial powers and the colonized peoples during colonization, decolonization, and after, we can gain insight into the motivations and mechanisms that have shaped subsequent human societies in North Africa.
“There are two ways to conquer a country,” Alexis de Toqueville claims, writing in the first half of the nineteenth century, the same era in which his native country began to colonize Algeria. “The first is to submit its inhabitants to dependency and rule over them directly or indirectly; such is the English rule in India. The second is to replace the indigenous people by the conquering race.”

Achieving the endeavor of this second way of conquering, that which defeats one’s self-identification by replacing an indigenous culture with a conquering one, implies a subtly more subversive kind of usurpation, because the indigenous people themselves are conquered rather than simply their right to self-govern. Instead of easily identifying their conquerors and distinguishing themselves from this imposed presence, indigenous peoples who experience this second way must begin to blur the lines that distinguish themselves from the foreign, conquering force. Considered by its practitioners a superior means of conquering because it brought ‘civilization’ to ‘primitive’ cultures, this amalgamation of identity supplanted indigenous government, culture, and sense of nationality in an often barely discernable process.

In the colonial era, one could refer to this second way as ‘assimilation.’ It was considered superior at the time of its use because its emphasis away from direct, imposing rule appeared a more humane method of colonization. Justifying their assimilationist colonialism by calling it a mission civilisatrice (civilizing mission), the French aimed to import their norms to a people deprived due to their deficiency of the French or European culture, religion, and quality of character. Compared to British methods of colonial rule in which subjects were permitted to maintain their existing cultural practices but endured the fierce imperial intrusion of British military enforcement, the notion that all French colonial subjects could become a “black/brown/yellow Frenchman” resonated with the French dévise “liberté, égalité, fraternité.” Yet it is now clear, according to historical accounts of the time and post-colonial intellectual reflections alike, that the French ‘expectation’ of real assimilation on the part of colonial subjects was simply pretense.

The pretenses are laid bare if one examines which rights the legislation of the colonial era granted to these supposedly assimilated individuals. The senatus-consulte of

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1 in Haddour (2000), p. 5
2 Murphy, David in Majumdar (2002), p. 61
July 1865, for instance, allowed the Algerian colonized to apply for citizenship with the stipulation that they renounced their ‘personal status,’ which indirectly referred to their Muslim identity.\(^3\) Later, the 1919 Jonnart law conceded power to Algerians, but only to the ‘enfranchised elite,’ that small percentage of Algerians that were educated. “A democratic gesture couched in term of segregationism,” the Jonnart law allowed this elite group to have a separate electoral college, a small percentage of representation in the *conseils généraux*, and no representation in the *conseil d’Algérie*.\(^4\) By offering only qualified rights to specific individuals, the French colonial government could assure that its colonial subjects would never truly assimilate. Instead, under the guise of easing the transition to frenchness, the colonized peoples could be exposed to and inundated with the French culture, hierarchical structures, and discourses.

This is how, despite the injustices and inadequacies which seem too evident to be acceptable to the indigenous peoples it effects, assimilation has proved a legitimately effective means of instituting and disseminating the power of a conquering system. The allure of the pretense of gaining access into the upper levels of the ruling power is enough to create willing subjects, who in turn provide the channels through which the culture of the ruling power can be disseminated, accepted, and assimilated. A specific kind of hegemony can then result, one that is a “combination of coercion and consent.”\(^5\) Italian communist Antonio Gramsci widely discussed this notion of cultural hegemony in the late 1920s and 1930s. It works through the gradual acceptance of ideologies rather than laws. Cultural hegemony thus quite insidiously sustains power because ideology, an abstraction, plants itself deeply into the consciousness, only manifesting itself in visible ways when it is accepted as common sense.

‘Common sense,’ usually believed to be that which is obviously true, in fact is the expression in popular consciousness of ideologies specific to a context of society and time. Gramsci explains common sense as “the uncritical absorption of a particular conception of the world by the popular masses, the diffusion of certain truths beyond

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\(^3\) Haddour (2000), p. 5
\(^4\) ibid, p. 7
\(^5\) Loomba (1998), p. 29
intellectual circles.”6 Those that comprise these circles are the real hegemons, offering and perpetuating believable ideologies to the societies in which they have real consequences.7 Since ideology evolves as it diffuses to a larger public, it can be integrated into popular consciousness alongside existing and uncontested socially-constructed truths. The underlying constitution of ‘common sense’ can thus easily go undetected to all but those participating in or exposed to the circles and the institutions that contribute to its construction.

One can correctly infer that the individuals subjugated to the creators and disseminators of their social reality, as was the situation in French colonization, rarely have the exposure that allows them to perceive the nature of the discourses that are assumed to be ‘common sense.’ However, as colonized individuals accessed the intellectual circles of the colonizers by way of Western medicine and social science, they began to question whether this reality should be accepted as is. This eventually began to happen among certain of the disenfranchised colonized, such as Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon. Both wrote from the perspective of French subjects whose resulting experience in the French education system led to the writing of their seminal works about the injustices inherent to the colonial condition. These authors and the awakening populace they wrote for and about began to reject the ideologies that an assimilationist colonialism had implanted in the structure of their social systems, economy, and political economy and in the superstructure of their consciousness.

Both Memmi and Fanon alert their co-sufferers to the consequences of assimilating themselves into a colonial regime, describing the pathologies and identity crises that result from such an attempt. Memmi’s *Portrait du colonisé précédé de portrait du colonisateur* (*The Colonizer and the Colonized*; 1957), by simply offering a description of the European myths about the colonized person, their lived situation, and their probable responses to their lived situation, presents a reality that contrasts with the one suggested by the principles and policies associated with assimilation. Fanon’s work, *Les damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*; 1961), meant to be incendiary, offers total resistance including violent retaliation as an appropriate—in fact, necessary—

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6 In Lawner (1973), p. 234
7 The construction of, and participation in discourse by academics will be addressed in Chapter Three.
response to the pervasive ills of French colonialism in Algeria. Their critiques appeared as Algeria began its fierce struggle to assert its independence. Targeting specific aspects of the engrained ‘common sense’ central to the perpetuation of France’s cultural hegemony, these revolutionary works testify to the effectiveness of cultural hegemony’s conquering potential.

One way that the French implanted their culture so deeply into the life and consciousness of the colonized was by imposing their time-honored social hierarchy onto the newly developing Algerian society. Just as French history has shown for centuries that social classes are effectively fixed and imply lifelong cultural and economic predispositions, so the colonized person could expect to achieve only certain degrees of cultural influence and economic prosperity. This is corroborated through the historical facts of the time, such as the impossibility of Algerians to hold more than a minority of representative spots in decision-making bodies such as the conseils généraux and the conseil d’Algérie.

Memmi and Fanon go on to describe the less evident impacts of the hegemonic paradigm that they had inherited. For example, the social hierarchy transmitted through ‘common sense’ made the impossibility of maneuvering within it seem natural. The role of a child growing up in a colonial system, Memmi states, affirming this presumed ‘naturalness’ of the social hierarchy, is to one day “shoulder the role of a colonized adult, in other words, to accept himself as an oppressed being.”

Fanon further points out that “the economic infrastructure is just as much a superstructure,” meaning that the hierarchy imported by the French came to be impressed upon the consciousness of all who participated in it, manifesting itself in a cultural and moral hierarchy. Not unlike the French ‘tiers-états’ whose unrest with the acceptance of this same social destiny precipitated the French Revolution, both Memmi and Fanon point out how the colonized view their position on the social hierarchy with a complicated mix of emotion.

While those low in the social hierarchy resent their own immobility, made more unbearable because of the success guaranteed to the elite—be it colonizers or nobility—the established hierarchy also creates a desire that can only be satisfied by reaching that

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8 “Le jeune homme est prêt à endosser son rôle d’adulte colonisé: c’est-à-dire à s’accepter comme être d’oppression” (Memmi [1957], p. 120).
9 “l’infrastructure économique est également une superstructure” (Fanon [1961], p. 43).
unattainable social position. “The gaze of the colonized upon the city of the colonizer is one of lust and envy. Dreams of possession, all forms of possession: to sit at the colonizer’s table, to sleep in the colonizer’s bed, with his wife if possible,” Fanon writes, describing the eerie fantasy of the person living within a social hierarchy. The existence of this desire as well as the knowledge that it will never be realized are common-sense notions familiar to the French, and necessarily embedded within the culture and the systems they establish in their colonies.

Perhaps an even more psychologically destructive aspect of the colonial cultural hegemony than hierarchical class structure, however, is its institutionalized racism. Certain colonial beliefs about the colonized peoples, the very same beliefs that seemed to morally justify colonialism, were not only conveyed to the colonized, but could be absorbed into their self-image. In short, the conviction that “Europeans conquered the world because their nature predisposed them to conquer it, and non-Europeans were colonized because their nature condemned them to be colonized” besides being packed with racist connotations, manifested itself in colonial daily life. Memmi goes on to enumerate certain of the mythic characteristics of the colonized: their laziness, stupidity, proclivity to steal, and inability to self-govern. The insidiousness of these racist assumptions, when set in the context of assimilationist colonialism, is that the colonized must accede to the way they are defined in order to survive in the established system. Further, in the three generations in which the Algerians were colonial subjects, they themselves came to accept and believe in these fundamentally racist characteristics.

While Memmi’s indictment of colonial racism reveals its consequences in everyday life, Fanon attacks the implication of the notion of the mission civilisatrice.

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10 “Le regard que le colonisé jette sur la ville du colon est un regard de luxure, un regard d’envie. Rêves de possession. Tous les modes de possession: s’asseoir à la table du colon, coucher dans le lit du colon, avec sa femme si possible” (ibid, p. 43).
11 “Nous en revenons, en effet, au même préjugé fondamental. Les Européens ont conquis le monde parce que leur nature les y prédisposait, les non-Européens furent colonisés parce que leur nature les y condamnait” (Memmi [1957], p. 132).
12 ibid, p. 101
13 ibid, p. 103
14 ibid, p. 104
15 ibid, p. 116
16 “De même que le colonisateur est tenté de s’accepter comme colonisateur, le colonisé est obligé, pour vivre, de s’accepter comme colonisé” (Memmi [1957], p. 110).
Because the morals and aspirations of the colonizers were presumed by this civilizing motive to be better than those of the colonized, the quality of the character of the colonized was little esteemed. Fanon describes a situation in which a member of the French Assemblée Nationale argued that it would “prostitute the Republic to allow it to penetrate the Algerian people.”

This statement demonstrates the utter lack of respect this French representative had for the Algerians, describing them in this example as dirty and capable of contaminating the French.

The rationale that the morals of the French could become infected through close contact with the colonized, when inverted, suggests that the Algerians could experience a moral purification through their contact with the French; “The recession of yellow fever and the progress of evangelization are parts of the same assessment of success,” Fanon sardonically asserts. By pointing out the unswervingly condescending connotation of the colonial regime’s justification of their presence and subsequent activity, Fanon indicates how the colonized learn to self-denigrate and to assimilate the racism that only further subdues them.

This racism which influences the self-concept of all colonized peoples, whether they are able to acknowledge its effects or not, is argued to have been common sense to Europeans of the colonial era. Rooted in European literary, artistic, and academic traditions, common sense dictated the world’s division into ‘East’ and ‘West,’ or the ‘Orient’ and the ‘Occident.’ Supposed to have begun with the rise of Christianity and Islam and the gradual expansion of trade routes to East Asia, by the nineteenth century this duality had relegated the ‘others’ encountered on such voyages to the realm of the imaginary. The Orient became the seat of everything the Occident was not: it was exotic and sensual, primitive and corrupt. Represented as such in the art, literature, opera, and academic works of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this imagined reality fixed itself as truth to those repeatedly exposed to it. Racism towards the ‘oriental’ therefore became a well-established ideology, of which the justification for colonialism was only one expression.

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17 “M. Meyer pouvait dire sérieusement à l’Assemblée nationale française qu’il ne fallait pas prostituer la République en y faisant pénétrer le peuple algérien” (Fanon [1961], p. 45).

18 “Le recul de la fièvre jaune et les progrès de l’évangélisation font partie du même bilan” (Fanon [1961], p. 45).
The fabric of this European common sense was not exposed until 1978, when Palestinian-American critic Edward Said compiled a century and a half’s worth of literary evidence that make plain the imagined notions of the ‘Orient’ on the part of the ‘Occident.’ His influential text, *Orientalism*, relies on the notion of discourse as developed by Michel Foucault, much as I have done here to explain why assimilation proved so destructive to the colonies. Said’s definition of ‘orientalism’ reiterates that discourse can be subversive, perhaps even more so than direct force, and perhaps it is even responsible for creating the rational basis that motivates direct force.

*Orientalism* describes the subtleties of this discourse’s subversive nature. The Occident assumes its power to control and deal with the Orient by “making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, [and] teaching it,” in turn supplying the Occident with the means of “dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”19 In other words, just as Memmi and Fanon’s cognizance of cultural hegemony’s existence correlates to their subjugation because of its enacted effects, so Said asserts that discourse itself becomes imperial because of its imposed authority.

Looking for patterns in the artistic, literary, and academic works and movements of the past two centuries provides what Said identifies as the only way to trace the path of orientalism’s formation. “Never has there been a nonmaterial form of Orientalism,”20 Said says, calling attention to the fact that orientalism is not an idea about the Orient but is instead the result of specific and individual, and then, collected responses to the Orient. One must acknowledge the comprehensive nature of orientalism’s formation by its repeated presence in European works in order to appreciate the scope of its results.

For Said, the tasks of pattern identification and of systemic analysis are foremost in achieving the ability to acknowledge the problems of orientalism. It is through these endeavors that Said discovered that orientalism is a discourse, and as such is able to effectively pervade ‘Occidental’ thought on the matter:

…without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively.

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19 Said (1978), p. 3
20 ibid, p. 23
during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism.\(^{21}\)

Thus any work on the subject of the Orient up to the point of Said’s exposure of the discourse of orientalism was necessarily participating in its reinforcement.

The Western academic world responded dramatically to the indictment of their work as implied in *Orientalism*. Said’s work appeared in 1978; the 1980s witnessed an avalanche of essays and studies about the postcolonial condition. Thus, the origin of what is now a field of criticism called postcolonial studies is often attributed to Said’s seminal text. The use of the word ‘postcolonial’ in its two forms ‘post-colonial’ and ‘postcolonial’ show how it can be interpreted both as a historically-located response and as a methodological approach in the same way as ‘postmodernism’ or ‘structuralism.’\(^{22}\) It has thus become, in the span of a few decades, a new way of considering the historically-situated colonial experience.

Postcolonial studies begins has as its premise the assertion we have argued here thus far, namely that colonialism supplanted the cultures of colonized peoples with those of their European conquerors and also imposed the racisms and hierarchies embedded therein. Postcolonial studies discusses the dismantling of the cultural hegemony so thoroughly instilled within colonized peoples during the colonial era. Therefore, it seeks to acknowledge the injustice of the colonial-era oppressions that occurred on many levels, as well as restoring or recreating a voice for the indigenous peoples whose culture was subjugated.

About how this can be done, there is little consensus among scholars of postcolonial studies. It represents a heterogeneity of responses to colonialism. The means of empowering marginalized colonial peoples, depending on which postcolonial scholar is writing, should best be done through education, through a retreat away from Western education, through literature and storytelling, through non-colonial language use, through a re-envisioning of nationality, through a re-envisioning of ethnicity, through a rewriting of history, through dance, through feminism, etc. The multiplicity of

\(^{21}\) ibid, p. 3

\(^{22}\) Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin (1995), p. xv
approaches to the question of postcolonialism allows it to encompass a range of issues about the results and the solutions to subjugation. This is true to the point that postcolonial studies is sometimes criticized for its “tendency to employ the term ‘postcolonial’ to refer to any kind of marginality at all.”

Although this approach has heightened awareness in the academic community of the marginalized or postcolonial subject, and has sought to give a voice to a people relatively voiceless under colonial rule, the disconnect between this academic revisioning and the relatively unchanged situation in the former colonies raises the question of how much has really changed. Postcolonial scholars discuss, for example, the notion of objectification of the colonial subject. Aimé Césaire quite bluntly states “equation: colonization = thingification.” Yet, although this objectification has become less exploitative since the advent of postcolonial studies, the postcolonial subject continues to be objectified.

In both circumstances, of colonialism and postcolonialism, the colonized person has been the object of discourse. Although postcolonial scholars contest the discursive character of their work due to the heterogeneity of its points of view, the fact that it relegates the ‘marginalized’ to a category to be discussed by some representative of the non-marginalized intellectual elite, and that it relies on certain common premises, confers to postcolonial studies a discursive quality. The discourse itself has changed from the colonial era, but as it still addresses their condition, and as discourse is itself larger than the people or the circumstances it discusses, those whose lives it touches necessarily remain objectified.

Said writes that “Unlike Michel Foucault, I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like orientalism. The unity of the large ensemble of texts I analyze is due in part to the fact that they frequently refer to each other.” Postcolonial studies similarly has a base of ideas upon which most of its scholars rely and to which most refer. Fanon and Memmi are frequently credited with first speaking on behalf of their co-

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sufferers; the basis of discursive theory is usually ascribed to Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and to some degree, Gramsci; Said is usually referred to as the first to have identified the discursive trends as relates to the postcolonial subject. The ‘ensemble of texts’ compiled by these authors allows for awareness and sensitivity towards the colonial subject while setting a foundation of rules that defines how they can be described in academia.

Postcolonial studies’ pursuit of the colonized identity allows for pluralism, but in determining a way to study this, and in establishing a canon of sorts that dictates how it can be talked about, the objectification achieved becomes a violence, in a way common to all discourse. ‘Violence’ is a loaded word, for it connotes malice and harmful physical force. But violence has also been used in reference to discourse because, in prescribing a specific way to see the world, it forcefully and insidiously, because without consent, constrains one’s point of view. It achieves this through the use of words, which limit the way one can perceive any concept. The specific meaning of words obscures alternative meanings for which there are not words, or for which there are other, unselected words.

Postcolonial scholars have conscientiously dealt with this problem inherent to a field of study, defined as such, yet their efforts are paradoxical because their arguments occur within a field that is attempting to establish itself. The discussion over the choice of ‘postcolonial’ or ‘post-colonial’ to describe the rising field evidences this paradox, as it demonstrates the care with which postcolonial scholars attempt to broaden their ability to perceive their subject while constraining it with specifically chosen concepts and words. Said’s statement that “never has there been a nonmaterial form of Orientalism” confirms the idea that any discourse is necessarily tied to the specific words chosen by those that create and promote the discourse. Thus, in the context of this discussion about violence, each text that belongs in the canon that Said designates as proof of orientalism is one violent act towards the people whose reality it defines and discusses. And similarly, Said’s text and the others that have explicitly contributed to the foundation of postcolonial studies are all participants in the violence of creating a discourse that has redefined and discusses in a new context the reality of the postcolonial subject.

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26 Other authors and their specific texts and theories are reliably cited in relation to postcolonial studies. Such texts and authors include Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?”; Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Down (and various essays); and Stuart Hall’s “New Ethnicities.”
The people of the former colonies have thus been the subject and object of many kinds of violence. The first, as I have just presented, is the violence suffered by the process of objectification that results from being the subject or referent of discourse. The second was the physical violence of the Independence movement. The violence of the Algerian Revolution was the response to the collective realization of the injustices done by their colonizers. Memmi predicted the veritable inevitability of this course of action: “So what is there left for the colonized to do? Unable to escape his condition in a way acceptable to the colonizer, he tries to liberate himself against the colonizer: he will revolt.”27 The revolt that followed Memmi’s description of it was one possible—but perhaps the most viable—means of shaking off of a condition imposed through colonial ideologies.

The Battle of Algiers28 and the events immediately preceding it demonstrated a level of systematic violence that seems unbelievably brutal except in light of the extreme oppression suffered under the violence of colonial discourse. It began in 1956 with a series of random terrorist attacks, the killing of European men in retaliation against the execution of two F.L.N. (Front de Libération Nationale) members. When the French Algerians, or pieds noirs, responded in kind by blowing up a house believed to hold F.L.N. members, as well as the three neighboring houses, the F.L.N. began to intensify their recruitment and organization of members.

Their first initiative made use of the female members of the F.L.N., who dressed up like pied noir women on their way to the beach, exiting the Muslim Kasbah with bombs in their purses. These were detonated in a soup kitchen and in a student café, thus targeting those least active in the military force that threatened their safety. Perhaps the rationale for this aggression stemmed from their desire to be as ruthlessly retaliative towards the French as they expected the French had done and would continue to do to
them; perhaps they wanted to make a statement about the complicity of even these most innocent of French citizens on their century-old history of oppression.

Soon after, a prominent member of the F.L.N. forces assassinated the city’s mayor, unleashing in the *pied noir* population a torrent of fear and of assault on the Muslim community, both those that were involved in the terrorist group and the innocent. Desperate, the French called for the support of the military, cognizant that this decision was binding them to a confrontation that “would have to end in a clear-cut defeat for one side or the other,” and further, that by transferring power from civil authority to the military, the decision-making leaders were “placing [their] signature on the death warrant of the Fourth Republic.”³⁹ The colonial discourse was similarly meeting its final days, as the French themselves were beginning to consider the colonized in a new way.

This discursive breakdown impacted many perspectives: not only that of the colonizers towards the colonized, but also that of the colonizer towards themselves, of the colonized towards colonizer, and of the colonized towards themselves. The nature of the strategies and the *déroulement* of the Battle of Algiers, which lasted from January until March of 1957, decisively determined this breakdown. In late January, the F.L.N. first tested French General Jacques Massu, brought in to quell the resistance, with a general strike. They wanted to externalize the conflict to catch the attention of the U.N., holding its opening session in New York. The strike was to last for eight days; on the first day, Muslim shops did not open, children did not go to school, and no one left their houses in the Kasbah. Massu responded with his troops by pulling the doors of shops off with armored cars, and by dragging shop owners to work under threat of imprisonment. Children were rounded up from their houses and forced to go back to school. Although the strike itself was broken, the force to which the French army resorted to reassert its threatened authority indirectly encouraged the resistance movement’s faith in ultimate success.³⁰

As terrorist attacks continued, and the F.L.N.’s support grew, French intelligence of the F.L.N.’s strategies became more attuned. They were able to make decisive captures of participants in the F.L.N.’s complicated pyramid of resistance; these

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²⁹ Horne (1978), p.188
³⁰ ibid, pp. 190-2
individuals were subjected to interrogation techniques debatably termed ‘torture.’ Government officials inadequately monitored much of the interrogation, so although they knew it happened, they did not know to what extent. Army officials such as Massu knew about one technique at least; the gégène administered electric shock to any body part to which it was attached, which was most notably the penis. Water tortures were also widely used; they consisted of dunking victims’ heads underwater repeatedly until they were half-drowned, or filling up their stomachs and lungs with a hose placed in the mouth. Officials, including Massu, who tried the gégène on himself to prove its acceptability, and one senior civil servant who wrote a report arguing for the institutionalization of torture because the water method “involves no risk to the health of the victim” okayed these practices.

Because torture connotes such cruelty, members of the resistance solidified their beliefs about their colonizers as a result of these acts; the colonizers responded to them with repulsion, with a justification of their actions, or, as Massu reveals, an indifference about the effects of the tortures. General Massu stated, “In my answer to the question: ‘Was there really torture?’ I can only reply in the affirmative, although it was never institutionalized or codified [...] I am not frightened of the word,” demonstrating an ambivalence towards the issue of torture. This attitude simultaneously represents the old discourse that objectified the colonized to the point of allowing such apathy towards their fate, and the fierceness to which the colonizers were willing to resort to maintain the discourse that had created their reality.

Representing quite different motivations for the French pieds noirs versus the Algerian combatants, violence nonetheless played a significantly strategic role for both in the eventual resolution of the Algerian War. However, the particularly remarkable violent encounters, such as the ones related to the Battle of Algiers, had in common that they all revealed the struggle to redefine or to maintain a dominator-dominated relationship. While the French armies resorted to excessive force and torture methods to

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31 ibid, pp. 199-200
32 ibid, pp. 197-8
33 ibid, p. 196
reassert their position of dominance, the F.L.N. resistance strove to usurp that position through violent testimonies of their wiliness and determination.

The end result was a resigned cession of power in Algeria from France to the F.L.N. in the Evian Accords of 1961. The F.L.N. had refused to accept the paternalist compromises offered to them in the guise of Président Charles de Gaulle’s plan for ‘auto-determination,’ which actually framed a new Algerian government in terms that allowed France to maintain authority. In response to the Accords, and the corresponding ceasefire in 1962, 900,000 pieds noirs, or 13% of Algeria’s population, made their panicked exodus out of Algeria into the France mainland, in which they had not lived for three generations. This severely depleted the new Algerian economy, as well as caused problems in the southern French cities whose streets the pieds noirs crowded in search of housing and jobs.

This brutal and immediate severing of ties between independent Algeria and the France that had had such a vital role in the daily life and functioning of Algeria for 130 years was perhaps one of the final violent blows the French delivered to the colony they had simultaneously nourished and abused, economically and culturally. Extracting the French structure and superstructure from the Algerian one caused such pain to both colonizer and colonized because the identities of each were implicated in the other.

This complicity was in large part overlooked, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, so what followed the French exodus from the colonies was the process of establishing a distinct Arab identity. Defining themselves in the new context, in which they were no longer the subjugated but the rulers, the Arabs who assumed power in independent Algeria participated in the construction of new identities for their people. Fanon describes this revolutionary privilege:

Decolonization never goes unnoticed because it weighs on the being; it fundamentally modifies the being; it transforms the spectator, void of essence, into privileged actors […] it introduces into the being a new rhythm, brought about by new men, a new language, a new humanity. Decolonization is the absolute creation of a new people.34

34 “La décolonisation ne passe jamais inaperçue car elle porte sur l’être, elle modifie fondamentalement l’être, elle transforme des spectateurs écrasés d’inessentialité en acteurs privilégiés […] Elle introduit dans l’être un rythme propre, apporté par les nouveaux hommes, un nouveau langage, une nouvelle humanité. La décolonisation est véritablement création d’hommes nouveaux” (Fanon [1961], p. 40).
Yet, managing such a task drew on the Arabs’ understanding of how a people should function in society, which resided in their colonial experience. Pitting themselves against this experience and the values imported to them by France, Algerians sought first to establish themselves in opposition to the terms of the colonial discourse.

The third violence of decolonization was therefore the self-imposed inversion of the hierarchy imparted to them by the colonial discourse. It can be argued that this violent societal overturning was a likely and temporary response to the socially reified effects of colonial discourse, but its radical nature brought about an outcome destructive to the newly-independent peoples for reasons different than colonization. “Decolonization is, very simply, the displacing of one ‘space’ of people by another ‘space’ of people,” Fanon states, but a similar statement was made at the beginning of this chapter to describe the process by which an assimilationist colonization takes place. Thus, in asserting their new identities, the people who had just shed their role as ‘the colonized’ reassumed the French hierarchy and institutionalized racism, that is to say, the colonial discourse, except from a different vantage point. Decolonization, in other words, gave to the Arabs the power of discourse.

This was the case for many colonies as they discovered their ability to recreate their identities, and came to be known as ‘négritude.’ Although it discusses race primarily, négritude was a relevant idea to all colonized people who had suffered subjugation to Western ideologies; its message encouraged the unity of those deemed ‘inferior.’ Négritude is thus a reaction to colonialism or orientalism as much as a reaction to racism.

Négritude was first conceived in the 1930s and 40s in an effort to “unite all Black peoples in the world subjugated by European colonialism and Western racism.” Those that developed the notion of négritude while living and studying in Paris, Martinician Aimé Césaire, Guinean Léopold Senghor, and Senegalese Léon Damas sought to empower Black peoples to value the very characteristics for which they were

35 “La décolonisation est très simplement le remplacement d’une « espèce » d’hommes par une autre « espèce » d’hommes. » (ibid, p. 39).
36 Stafford in Majumdar (2002), pp. 183-4
discriminated against. Fanon treated these ideas in a book that preceded *Les damnés de la terre*, called *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952; *Black Skin, White Masks*):

As I begin to recognize that the Negro is the symbol of sin, I catch myself hating the Negro. But then I recognize that I am a Negro. There are two ways out of this conflict. Either I ask others to pay no attention to my skin, or else I want them to be aware of it. I try then and find value for what is bad—since I have unthinkingly conceded that the black man is the color of evil.\(^{37}\)

Considering oneself in such a light twice serves to affirm the individual, once by appreciating oneself, and once by denigrating the oppressive society that has defined a given characteristic as ‘bad,’ thus punishing that society and further elevating one’s position in relation to it.

This act of negative definition, or of defining oneself in terms that oppose another entity, are found throughout discussions of négritude. For example, “Césaire places ‘Africa’ as the binary opposite of ‘Europe’, a Europe that is ‘decadent’, ‘stricken’, and ‘morally, spiritually indefensible.’”\(^{38}\) Négritude founder Senghor later went on to become an autocratic ruler, who benefited from the notion of négritude as he rose to power by proclaiming the superiority of the oppressed. This approach obviously has its shortcomings, such as its staunch inability to reconcile with the side that had had the power to create the original, oppressive discourse. In fact, négritude quite closely resembles the discourse debunked by Said, even as it recognizes the injustices pointed out in *Orientalism*.

Interpretations of writings about négritude reveal that it was not meant for such a destiny, however. Key texts that present the principles of the négritude movement, such as Césaire’s 1950 speech *Discours sur le colonialisme* demonstrate how it is ideally “a stage towards Black liberation and the end of racism, rather than an *end* in itself,” eventually rendered unnecessary when notions of inferiority were rectified\(^{39}\). But power given, wielded, and found effective in the hands of those from whom it has for centuries been deprived, can scarcely be expected to be forfeited.

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38 in Loomba (1998), p. 23
39 Stafford in Majumdar (2002), pp. 183-4
It is for this reason that a discourse prescribing hierarchy, like the one presented in this chapter, maintains such a grip on every society. “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas,”⁴⁰ and that class or that society, being concerned with its own preservation, is apt to propagate, or at least to perpetuate, the ideologies that guarantee the continuance of their rule. Chapter Two presents how the Arabs, having freshly obtained their freedom from their oppressors, reinstate the oppressive discourse of their colonizers.

⁴⁰ Marx & Engels in Loomba (1998), p. 29
CHAPTER TWO.
Asserting national identity: the Arabs’ inheritance

Orientalism calls into question the position of authority held by the peoples of the ‘Occident’ over those from the ‘Orient.’ The origin of this authority, as Orientalism indicates, is a discourse crafted in the imaginations of Europeans rather than any demonstrated or measurable superiority, if such a measure could even exist. But by exposing this discourse, Said also questions the nature of authority. His indictment of uncontested authority, because of its effects on the peoples of North Africa, the Middle East, and East Asia, challenges his readers to reconsider the authorities that they may too easily accept:

There is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive, it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgment it forms, transmits, reproduces. Above all, authority can, indeed must, be analyzed.¹

These reflections on the nature of authority are not limited to their application to the colonial peoples or to those that were historically defined in Western literature and study as ‘Oriental,’ however.

This chapter will discuss an authority system—the one resulting from a discourse inherited from colonialism—that evolved in response to French colonization in North Africa. The post-colonial assertion of identity in the North African Arab population transformed, by a process of a reification that happened in the matter of a few years, into a pervasive and enforced authority over the indigenous Berbers. Having been assimilated into a hegemony that prescribed an established hierarchy and institutionalized racism, perhaps it can be seen as inevitable that independence from that system would result in a reproduction of it.

In 1964, as Algeria crafted the framework of its new structure, free from colonial rule, charters declared the following: “Algeria is an Arab-Islamic country […] The Arab-
Islamic essence of the Algerian nation was a stronghold against its destruction by colonialism.” In defining the ‘essence’ of its people, this official proclamation represents and, more importantly, prescribes national pride in terms that clearly set the new Algeria apart from its colonial legacy. However, the charter goes on to clarify, “This definition […] is opposed to any underestimation of the original Arab dispersion [into Algeria].” This specification further defines the Algerian essence as set apart from what in 1964 was a less visible and vocal legacy, one that predates the advent of colonialism in 1830 by one thousand years.

The legacy of the Berber presence in North Africa went conspicuously unacknowledged or even deliberately denied as the countries of the Maghreb constructed their post-independence national identities. This denial was conspicuous because the Berber population comprises at least twenty percent of Algeria’s population, and at least forty percent of Morocco’s. This population, united across the Maghreb under the label of ‘Berber’ because of its shared linguistic origins and related cultural traditions, obviously figured into the composition of these fledgling nation-states. But, as the charter cited above evidences, the Berbers’ claim of ownership over the land to which they are indigenous threatened to compromise its very essence; by mentioning ‘the original Arab dispersion’ into Algeria, the charter specifically refers to the Berbers who inhabited the land into which the Arabs dispersed so long ago.

Their intentional exclusion from the process of forming the Moroccan and Algerian national identities reveals the deliberateness with which such an identity is crafted and perhaps can help us to infer the criteria for identity construction on a national level. The weight that these countries placed on the standardization of culture, religion, and especially on language, begs an analysis of both the causes and the effects of authoritative proclamations on the ‘essence’ of a people. Such notions about this essence, once disseminated and assimilated, can be dismantled, as was demonstrated by the colonized in regards to the discourses that determined their role in the colonies. However, the capacity for thoroughness in this dismantling process is questionable,

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evidenced by the tendency to reconstruct a national identity that reacts to, but is fundamentally based upon the old model.

The construction of the ‘Arab-Islamic’ identity began as part of Morocco and Algeria’s campaigns to establish an identity that countered the one destructively and incompletely assimilated during the colonial era. These countries gained their independence from France in 1956 and 1962, respectively. With a goal of supplanting the predominance of the French language and frenchness in North African culture, education, and government, policies and propaganda propelled the Arabic language, as well as Arabic and Islamic traditions, to the forefront of public consciousness through a process they termed ‘Arabization.’ Arabization sought to restore to the colonized peoples of Morocco and Algeria an identity outside of the French one imposed upon them while colonialism endured.

Arabization has many expressions, all with the aim of restoring an Arabic identity to the region while facilitating the modernization that the permeation of frenchness had fostered during colonialism. These two aims are almost contradictory, for a return to an Arabic identity is usually seen as a return to traditions neglected or trivialized during the colonial era in favor of the Western values of the colonizer. The Arabic traditions lie primarily within Islam, for which the Arabic language is considered a medium for the transmission of divine revelation, and which also prescribes laws (shari‘a) that, to various degrees depending on interpretation, govern a state and establish its infrastructure. The radically different language, governing body, and infrastructure installed as a result of prioritizing tradition were regarded as the means of setting the newly forming nation-states in opposition to the Western structures relied upon during French colonialism.³

Yet the ‘return to tradition’ sought after by the process of Arabization had been made virtually impossible after the prolonged contact these Arab-Islamic societies had had with the structures introduced and imposed by their colonizers. In terms both of symbolism and of application, Arabization is quite an undertaking in part because the institutions over which Arabic was destined to dominate in many cases had not existed before the French introduced them. Arabization therefore first necessitated a

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³ Grandguillaume (1990), p. 157
modernization of the Arabic language and the infrastructure of Arab society, using French as a model of these. Anthropologist Gilbert Grandguillaume, acknowledging the complexity of this paradox, cites two reasons for the Maghreb’s dependence on the modernization of their colonizers:

The first is that these societies functioned entirely within this Western, modern framework already. The states themselves in their specific structures as modern states were inheritors of the colonizing state, and giving up modernity would make them lose their structure of authority, for the state with its present structure did not exist before colonization. The second reason is that no public would have accepted a ‘return to the Middle Ages’ and cutting themselves off from the advantages already possessed or hoped for from modernity.\(^4\)

Therefore, the movement towards the Arabization of Morocco and Algeria had to take into account how their ties to the Western world and to modernity, which were imposed upon them and then, paradoxically, desired by them, would allow for the return to tradition.

The foremost example of mediating between traditional and modern when constructing the new, Arabized societies, was manifested in the choice of national language in the region. Language planning, because it is so deliberate and has symbolic value and political ramifications of fantastic proportions, is a hallmark component in the construction of authority, besides being a principal component of it. This is to say that the language spoken in a particular context is determined by the discourse that surrounds that context. These discourses can be deliberately selected, especially during ‘state formation’: “It is in the process of state formation that the conditions are created for the constitution of a unified linguistic market, dominated by the official language,”\(^5\) Bourdieu states, emphasizing the economic associations of dominant languages with his use of the word ‘market.’ Thus, language planning is the very willed choosing of a discourse that the language planners hope to make official because it is most ‘lucrative’ to the formation of their state in some way.

The French language is a particularly good example of how national language planning attests to the values of its planners, who seek to best benefit certain interests of

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\(^4\) ibid, p. 158  
\(^5\) Bourdieu in Burke, Crowley, and Girvin (2000), pp. 468-9
their state. For the French, one interest protected by the language has always been an image of power and of superior rationality that are considered reified by the French language. Having secured its status as a national language in the 16th century, French soon came to represent the people who best spoke it, as the bel usage, or beautiful use of the language, was based upon its usage in the Royal Court and among the greatest authors of the time. The proper French that took shape after it became the national language began to acquire certain values that made its standardization process a source of nationalistic, and very elite, pride:

What distinguishes our language from other ancient and modern languages is the order and the construction of the phrase. This order must always be direct and necessarily clear. The French first name the subject of the discourse, then the verb, which is action, and finally the object of this action: this is the logic natural to men [...] French syntax is incorruptible. From it results admirable clarity, the eternal base of our language. That which is not clear is not French: that which is not clear is yet English, Italian, Greek, or Latin.

In conflating the language itself with the characteristics of its speakers, this author demonstrates why and how language planning fixed itself within the French structure.

1635 saw the creation of the Académie Française, responsible for regulating the French lexicon and syntax; this Institution still occupies a prominent building in Paris as well as a prominent position in French society policing orthography, Anglicization, and the usage of French in francophone regions. As American words for technology invented in America reaches France, then, this Institution must determine the nature of their representative power. By banning the use of American words in government documents and in the media, the Académie Française seeks to retain an image of French speakers that continues to conjure up the images of rationality, clarity, and superiority alluded to in

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6 “Voici donc comme on definit le bon Usage. C’est la façon de parler de la plus saine partie de la Cour, conformément à la façon d’écrire de la plus saine partie des Auteurs du temps” (“Here is how one defines Good Use: it is the manner of speaking in the most proper part of the Court, conforming to the manner of writing of the most proper Authors of the time”) (Vaugelas [1647]).

7 “Ce qui distingue notre langue des langues anciennes et modernes, c’est l’ordre et la construction de la phrase. Cet ordre doit toujours être direct et nécessairement clair. Le Français nomme d’abord le sujet du discours, ensuite le verbe qui est l’action, et enfin l’objet de cette action: voilà la logique naturelle à tous les homes … le syntaxe française est incorruptible. C’est de là que résulte cette admirable clarté, base éternelle de notre langue. Ce qui n’est pas clair n’est pas français: ce qui n’est pas clair est encore anglais, italien, grec ou latin” (extract from Rivarol, Antoine de [1784]. *Discours sur l’universalité de la langue française*. in Lodge [1993], p. 184).
the excerpt above. One author states, “Fighting against these words [is] a way of fighting American technological superiority” which seemed to threaten “French cultural productivity and French distinctiveness.” The Académie Française, an authority with the power to influence the system in which French speakers participate, thus demonstrates how language planning confers a great deal of symbolic meaning to a language.

The symbols within the language policy of the Maghreb represent the paradoxical modernization of traditional notions. This was manifested through the creation of a hybrid Modern Arabic. This new language is comparable in construction to the Modern Standard Arabic, which had recently developed in the Middle East to serve as a usable alternative to, as well as a bridge between Classical/Koranic Arabic and dialect Arabic. Modern Arabic in the Maghreb similarly based itself upon the ‘high’ and ‘lower’ forms of Arabic, capturing the traditional functions and connotations of Classical Arabic, and the colloquial functions of dialect Arabic. However, the hybridized Modern Arabic also drew upon the French language because there remained numerous domains for which versions of Arabic were inadequate, semantically and functionally.

Semantics is the study of the meanings of words, and a significant part of Arabization involved transposing French meanings into modern Arabic letters and sounds, a process that symbolized the translation of frenchness—connoting colonization and hegemony—into the politically and discursively new paradigm over which the Arabs had control. Arabization forced upon its advocates a reflection on the meanings of the words that had become structurally fundamental as well as habitual in daily life, but that had no translation in any of the languages spoken in the region besides French. Due to the embeddedness of the French language in Algeria and Morocco’s modern systems, the period of Arabization witnessed a deluge of ‘neologism,’ or the coining of new words that were never necessary within the traditional uses of Classical/Koranic Arabic. Similarly, Modern Arabic serves functions that originated in the Maghreb because of the French. Such domains include math, science, and technology in the realm of education, as well as sectors of bureaucratic or administrative bodies that had not existed before colonialism. As the language question attests, the colonial systems upon which the

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8 Weinstein (1990), p. 9
9 Grandguillaume (1990), pp. 154-160
Maghreb sought to counter their new systems and which had inspired Arabization had therefore also become a basis for the constructions of the independent nation-states.

Choosing to create a Modern Arabic to catalyze the Arabization process thus served to define the ‘Arab-Islamic essence’ in terms simultaneously opposite and parallel to Frenchness; but it also served as a conscious choice to veer away from the maternal and profane dialects of Arabic and Berber. Not unlike French, these dialects contained elements that, for practical and connotative reasons, compromised the objectives of Arabization. These dialects oftentimes lacked written form and were localized, making them difficult to standardize and even more difficult to rival the intellectual capabilities of French. But, additionally, Berber dialects and Arabic dialects “evoked tribal roots or urban roots.”\(^{10}\) This connotative dimension of Berber, especially in the context of the statements made in charters limiting Berber claims to the ‘Arab-Islamic essence’ as seen above, reveals the discursive motivation of its exclusion from Arabization.

The Berber culture has long been distinguished from the Arabic one that has rather peacefully coexisted with it in the Maghreb since the 8th century. Efforts to distinguish Berbers from Arabs had begun long before those countries gained their independence from France, but these efforts were championed for reasons other than Arabization. In Morocco, a specific Berber policy, the dahir of 1930, administratively divided the Berbers from the Arabs. Signed by the sultan of Morocco, this document was created at the behest of French authorities in hopes of preserving the Berbers’ abilities to retain their own religious practices.\(^{11}\) The measures taken in Algeria around this same time dealt with the Berbers less explicitly than the dahir of 1930; instead, academic studies of the colonial era presented the Berbers’ ‘ethnic’ tendencies, fixing these notions to the popular understanding of the Berbers. These studies characterized the Berbers as “uncivilized warriors with a history of defending their mountain refuges against all invaders (Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, French)”\(^{12}\); in other words, in either culture, ‘Berber’ came to designate particular characteristics that set them apart from their Arab compatriots.

\(^{10}\) ibid, p. 152  
\(^{11}\) Hoisington (1978), pp.433-4  
While colonial efforts to address the Berbers only served at the time to delineate the difference between the Berbers and the Arabs, they later allowed the Arabs to prey upon ‘ethnic’ and cultural distinctions that had become well-established. One such distinction was the Berbers’ proclivity to manifest more ‘European’ qualities. For example, they were generally thought to be less fanatically religious in their Islamic faith, a quality that had inspired their French protectors to instate the dahir of 1930. The Berbers were also generally perceived by their colonizers as more docile, more easily assimilated into the colonial framework, and more sympathetic towards democratic systems than their Arab compatriots.  

One European historian praises the “impenitent rationalism, virtue as inherited from the Greeks […] and the genius of the freedom in eternally practicing democracy” found in the Berbers. The privileges and praise enjoyed by the Berbers during the colonial era thus became a primary reason that the Arabs, establishing an identity that emphasized their departure from an identity of subjugation to a European power, demonstrated this departure by suppressing Berberness in favor of Arabization.

Thus Arabization went beyond standardizing and requiring the use of the Arabic language, the prevalence of Arabic culture, and the presence of Arabs in the government; it also explicitly excluded the Berbers from many privileges. This ironic role reversal, in which the Arabs’ assertion of identity resulted in their imposition of systems and values upon a less powerful force, became a sort of tyranny over the Berbers that resembled the one exerted by the French during colonialism. By 1973, the Boumedienne regime of newly independent Algeria had begun taking steps to assure the predominance of Arabic culture at the expense of Berber language and culture: “University courses in Berber were eliminated, the public and literary use of Berber was outlawed, and a disproportionate number of Islamic institutes were established in Berberophone areas.” Repression of Berberness reached a climax, for Algeria, in 1980 when government authorities banned a conference at a Kabyle university on Ancient Berber Poetry. The ban was met by several

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13 ibid, pp. 11-12  
14 “un rationalisme impenitent, vertu héritée de la Grèce […] la génie de la liberté dans pratique éternelle de la démocratie,” (Guernier [1950], p. 11).  
days of demonstrations by students, an event which came to be known as the ‘Kabyle Spring’ or the ‘Berber Spring.’

Arabization policies in Morocco, which pertained primarily to the language of education, had less overtly violent but equally far-reaching effects on the Berber language. Arabization established Arabic as the language of schooling, because “with Independence, nationalist feeling came down strongly against what it saw as a divisive colonial language policy.” Schoolchildren that spoke Berber therefore became bilingual, contributing to the relegation of the Berber language to fewer and fewer domains. Berbers are “fully aware that, unlike Standard Arabic or French, [Berber] is not a language of wider communication because it is not used in finance, science, technology, and international affairs. Its role is limited to the cultural and social domains.” The subsequent lack of prestige ascribed to Berber often dissuades parents living in urban settings where Moroccan Arabic is the standard for all official, educational, and social interactions from conversing with their children in it. This, coupled with Morocco’s rapid urbanization, motivated by the scarcity of economic resources in the rural, mountainous regions, has led many to point to the necessary bilingualism of Berberophones as the reason for the certain demise of the Berber language and culture.

Moroccan policy-makers have recently demonstrated an eagerness to intervene in order to slow or to prevent this imminent demise. The Royal Institute of Amazigh (Berber), established in 2001, has set itself to the task first of officially recognizing Berber as a language in Morocco, and then of codifying and standardizing it. In 2003, the ancient Berber alphabet of Tifinagh, little used amongst Berberophones, was declared by King Mohommad VI to be the official alphabet for writing Berber. These interventions are laudable in their effort to make Berber a more accessible language for scholars and educators, but they do not change the perception that “Berber seems to be reduced to a minority language that is regarded by urban people as both ‘archaic’ and

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16 Mezhoud (1993), p. 143
17 Wagner (1993), p. 17
18 Ennaji (2005), p. 77
19 “According to recent government statistics, rural population has decreased from 75% in 1956 to 51% in 1999” (ibid, p. 77).
20 ibid, p. 77; Wagner (1993), p. 18
‘inferior.’” These attitudes will persist as long as other languages retain their ‘official’ usage in specific domains: Standard Arabic is perceived as the language of religion; French and Standard Arabic are perceived as the languages of the office and of the classroom; and Moroccan Arabic is perceived as the language of the home and of the street. Berber, in other words, has no authoritative role in any of the social or cultural sectors.

Authority ultimately is responsible for dictating the role of these languages in their societies, as it is the discourses of each of these sectors that determine and perpetuate a popular opinion about what appropriately belongs within them, and it is authority that has the capability of creating and perpetuating discourse. The authorities during the period of Arabization ensured the popular attitudes that fixed the positions of each language in the Maghreb. As Said described, authority “is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgment it forms, transmits, reproduces;” because Berber has hardly been authoritatively deemed ‘true’ or received a favorable judgment that is ‘transmitted’ or ‘reproduced,’ those who have participated in the construction of discourses pertaining to language clearly have not themselves valued the Berber language or culture so little privileged in popular attitude.

But in holding positions of authority in the paradoxical circumstances of the new nation-states, the identities of the authorities themselves are conflicted, causing a disconnect between who they are and what they disseminate. The individuals and the structures they represent, being the authorities of their societies, certainly have a significant bearing over the lives of their compatriots; as Marx and Engels state, “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.” Paradoxically, although the ruling class in the independent nation-states was now comprised of Arabs and Muslims, the ruling ideas were those they had assimilated from their colonizers. Thus, although the authorities were responsible for the real and the symbolic consequences of their decisions, they in fact were subsumed into the discourses that motivated their decisions. The leaders of these countries created an environment in their states that was

21 Ennaji (2005), p. 73
22 See appendix, figure B (ibid, pp. 159-162).
23 in Loomba (1998), p. 29
conducive to the repression of Berberness, because, as with the example of Modern Arabic, they desired to express an ‘essence’ that raised the status of their traditional identity while legitimizing it in the terms valued by the modern Western world. Yet in the midst of fortifying their status and legitimacy, these contradicting goals created a new entity of these authorities.

Boumedienne gives disturbingly clear proof of how authorities of this era were subject to an identity crisis, as they sought to assert the legitimacy and power of which they had been deprived during colonialism. Boumedienne, a Berber himself, was the second president of Algeria and thus a significant authority for the new nation-state, but he fostered an environment supportive of the discourse of Arabization to the detriment of those that shared his Berber heritage. This resembled those Algerians and Moroccans that, in attending French-run schools, became an elite alienated from their Islamic roots. A “product of the Islamic University of El Azhar, Egypt,” Boumedienne was “a staunch supporter of the Arab-Islamic ideology” because he saw the potential for power contained therein. His platforms and policies, like that of his successor Chadli Ben Jedid in 1978, seemed to give priority to establishing the legitimacy of the ruling regime and bringing economic prosperity to the country, always at the expense of popular interests. The activities of these rulers contributed to a popular perception of the government one author describes as “Orwellian,” “as an invincible monster, ubiquitous and capable of crushing the slightest manifestation of disagreement with officialdom.” Although the boldness of the Kabyle Spring served to challenge the prevailing fear of the state, the government was able within a year, and without too much resistance, to reassert their dominant role via hardline Arab-Islamic officials. Consequently, a year later, the governing committees revoked the compromises they had negotiated with the Kabyle Berbers and had restored the status quo of Arabization.

Arabization, predictably, continued for several decades, even while Berber political and cultural movements quietly amassed support, because it was a necessary catalyst in the formation of a new Algerian and Moroccan identity. The process of

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26 ibid, p. 150
27 ibid, pp 155-6
legitimizing the fledgling governments compromised the desired ‘essence’ of its leaders and repressed Berberness, but it was a characteristic step in a process that supplies to its people a sense of collective belonging, or of ‘nationality.’ Algeria and Morocco secured their independence and created their own governing bodies—a democratic republic and a constitutional monarchy, respectively—thus establishing themselves as nation-states.

Yet the allegiance of their citizens to those nation-states and their self-identification with them would depend on an understanding of who they are and what binds them together. Ideally, as John Stuart Mill states, “it is in general a necessary condition of free institutions that the boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities.”

Nationality, then, is an identification distinct from what is dictated by state boundaries. In fact, ‘nationhood’ does not always abide by political borders, but it can result in fierce loyalties that supersede the ones determined by ‘state’-motivated allegiances like citizenship. This is exemplified throughout the world whenever religion, ethnicity, and language are the basis for conflicts within a country’s borders.

Revolution against the colonial powers, followed by campaigns of Arabization, supplied to the Arabs a new nationality rooted in religious, ethnic, and linguistic ties, but an assurance of this affirmation required more than just these elements. Following colonialism, the peoples of Morocco and especially Algeria experienced a surge of collective identity, but it was mingled with the confusion of separating the colonial self from the ‘pre-colonial’ or ‘extra-colonial’ self. Ending the colonial relationship with France had resulted in a painful uprooting of an economic, political, and educational structure, as well as a superstructure that determined the social hierarchy, cultural values, and other discursive factors, not to mention the exodus of nearly a million residents whose presence was a fixture in the urban areas. Allowed a rather austere freedom to reinvent themselves, the Arabs created their collective identity from a common starting point for the basis of nationality: negative definition.

Nationhood relies in part in knowing ‘who we are not’ and in making a fundamental distinction between an ‘us’ and a ‘them,’ but these categories are arbitrary. The ‘us-them’ discourse has become such a natural part of identity construction that “the

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discourse of negative definition [...] has defined human symbolic interaction for centuries.” Nations, in other words, virtually rely on this discourse in their self-construction. While the basis for negative definition is sometimes apparent, as with ethnicity, religion, and language, which have discernable boundaries, these boundaries in another context show themselves to be mutable. Ernst Renan, whose treatise in 1869 has often been mined for the academic conversation on the nature of nationhood, discusses the transient nature of negative differences. “The essence of a nation is that all its individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things. No French citizen knows whether he is burgonde, alain, taïfale, Visigoth,” Renan points out, indicating the many ethnic and linguistic groups that have contributed to the make-up of who now considers themselves a cohesive ‘us.’ He goes on to qualify that there is “nothing natural or necessary about the French borders.” The discourse that lends to a forgetting of this unnaturalness, then, serves those that perpetuate it in other ways.

One way that defining the qualities of ‘them’ that are in opposition to ‘us’ serves those that rely upon such definitions is by fostering a greater understanding of what is meant by ‘us.’ Because “discourses of negative difference are constructed through participation in the process of social definition,” how one is socially defined, or how one socially defines oneself, becomes implicit in the existence of the negative other. This is one significant point in Orientalism: Said points out how the Occident came to depend upon the perpetuation of the myths of Orientalism, for these myths situated the Occident in a clearly defined dichotomy. But having this negativity as a base upon which identity is formed entails “hierarchy, victimage, and guilt” as part and parcel of one’s reason for belonging to a group. Paired with the structures that accompany statehood, these conditions thus become systemically disseminated, taught, even mandated.

The us-them dichotomy is also useful in nation-building because constructing a ‘them’ that poses a threat can mobilize ‘us’ around a cause that gives ‘us’ new meaning.

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29 McPhail (2002), p. 15
30 “l’essence d’une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses. Aucun citoyen français ne sait s’il est burgonde, alain, taïfale, Visigoth” (Renan [1997], p. 15).
31 “Les limites de la France [...] n’avaient rien de naturel ni de nécessaire” (ibid, p. 17).
32 McPhail (2002), p. 11
33 ibid, p. 13
and a reason to band together. In the case of states created after the breakdown of colonialism, the ‘other’ that gives form to their nationality and impetus to their rallying together is often the colonial power. As we saw in négritude, this negative definition serves to denigrate the abusive power and to raise up the oppressed one. The fortification of self-identity exists whenever the nationality is threatened in minority groups, who, before it is threatened, may not have understood the nature of their nationality. This phenomenon can be seen among the Arabs preceding, motivating, and following the independence of Algeria and Morocco.

Unfortunately, in terms of the ‘us-them’ dichotomy that has become standard to an identification with a nationality, the Berbers were included in neither the polarity of the Arabs nor that of the French, although they had suffered at the hands of both groups for their associations with each polarity. Naturally, the Berbers were able to turn to a ‘nation’ other than the French or the Arab ones that did not include them, that of the Berbers. This nation did not obey the political boundaries established in the making of the Moroccan and Algerian nation-states; however, it nonetheless supplied to the Berbers a collective sense of identity that neither colonization nor Arabization had fully offered them.

Nationality can be distinct from legal citizenship either in transcending the borders of several states or in being pocketed within the confines of state boundaries. The Kurds, for example, find their national identity in terms of an ethnicity that comprises only an ethnic minority in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria. All together they number between 25-30 million people and are the largest ethnic group in the world without a separate country. With an ethnicity, a language, and cultural practices such as Kurdish cuisine and the celebration of the Kurdish new year that continue to unite this large group despite great oppression and repression of both in their home states, the Kurds as a whole persevere in identifying with their Kurdish nationality over the one dictated by their state.

Certain among the Native Americans indigenous to the United States, on the other hand, seek their identities in the enclaves of their tribal associations. The history of their relationship with the United States is fraught with violence, mandated relocation to remote areas of the country, and attempts of various degrees to assimilate into the
American mainstream. Now, however, some tribes vie for the ability to maintain their cultural traditions without having to assimilate into the prevalent non-Native American culture around them. “Not everyone in the pot wants to ‘melt,’” Myaamia Language Reclamation Project director Daryl Baldwin says on behalf of members of certain tribes; he goes on to distinguish between connotations of ‘segregation,’ pointing out that “separate cultures coexisting” can be productive and peaceful when occurring in an environment of respect for others.  

The freedom to segregate prevents one’s nationality and sense of belonging to a tribe from becoming diluted through assimilation. As with the Kurds, however, the license of the Native Americans to practice their cultural traditions can only be granted in a limited way; strong allegiances that deviate from state-assigned identification pose a threat to the state’s coherence.

Arabization sought to create a standard for the coherence of the nation-states of the Maghreb that was threatened by the Berber identification, on both an intra- and international level. In other words, both kinds of nationality—the one that transcends borders and the one limited to enclaves within a country’s borders—characterize the Berber situation in the Maghreb. Although the Berbers, in an ancient sense, were comprised of many different kingdoms or tribes, they have always demonstrated a remarkable sense of a “shared consciousness” that provided their diverse groups with coherence because of common social values and spirituality. This spirituality is explained as the dimension that defines Berber “thought, their conception of the world and of the place of man in the world,” which demonstrates, despite the diverse background of Berber groups, a “profound unity.”

This sense of unity has only increased with the Maghreb’s contact with outside groups that set to the task of defining the Berbers. As they defined the Berbers, they also supplied the Berber intellectual with tools that helped them in their self-definition. For example, “Occidental science has opened up unsuspected horizons to the Kabyle Berber intellectual in bringing them information, tools for approaching their culture, 

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34 Baldwin (2005)
35 “conscience communautaire” (Chaker [1989], pp. 20-1).
36 “La bipartition des populations berbères […] ne fait que souligner la futilité qu’il y aurait à distinguer les homes selon qu’ils ont un manteau court ou une tunique longue, sans tenir compte de leur pensée, de leur conception du monde et de la place de l’homme dans le monde” (Servier [1985], vii).
37 “l’unité profonde” (Servier [1985], vii).
argumentation, and new references […] After [colonization], the Berber intellectual refers themselves to the language, the ancient history, and the ‘berbernness’ of the Maghreb”\textsuperscript{38} As non-Berber dominant groups in the Maghreb continue to penetrate into Berber domains, so does the Berber self-identification fortify.

Yet, although the Berber intellectual has discovered a strengthening of self-identification as a result of imposed contact with the dominant presences in their homeland, this contrasts with the enduring Berber narrative, which has had the Berber populations retreating for thousands of years to the remotest or least accessible regions of their countries in order to assure and reinforce their sense of nationality. Berberophones exist in the greatest density either in arid, mountainous regions where they were driven by invaders, missionaries, and colonizers in the interest of preserving the freedom to practice their own culture and lifestyle, or else they exist in urban areas sufficiently dense to make it difficult for exterior influences to dictate which languages are spoken.\textsuperscript{39} It is in these regions that Berber has best thrived, escaping the political realities of the dynasty, empire, or conquering force that presumed to determine their reality. It is in these regions where Berberness was least required to ‘melt.’

When the metaphoric melting heat is applied to a group that poses a seeming threat to another group’s cohesion and sense of collective identity, however, the option becomes whether and how a group will melt. Perhaps, in the case of the Arabs, the Revolution and other resistance movements were their refusal to continue to permit the assimilation of their people into the French discourses. Contact with a ‘them’ that threatens one’s ability to belong results, as this Chapter has shown, in a strengthening of ‘us’-ness for a multitude of reasons; this result has become virtually inevitable. For societies that have inherited discourses of negative definition that posit the other in opposition, and imbue oneself with a drive to create a hierarchy with authoritative notions of superiority, the other is destined to become an alienated entity.

\textsuperscript{38} “la science occidentale ouvre des horizons presque insoupçonnés à l’intellectuel kabyle en lui apportant une information, des outils d’approche de sa culture, une argumentation et des références nouvelles […] après [la colonisation], il se réfère à la langue, à l’histoire ancienne et à la berbérité du Maghreb.” (Chaker [1989], p. 21).

\textsuperscript{39} Chaker (1989), p. 11-2
But today, it would seem that the Berbers are poised to pursue their own course of action in response to the discourse of Arabization. Their increasing ability to motivate change in their favor despite rigidly fixed social norms suggests that the Berbers are gaining access to the means of creating discourse. As stated in the introduction, however, this change in events should be questioned, for the alienating condition of the hierarchical discourse has a long precedent of inheritance. Perhaps in the case of the Berbers, this inheritance is embedded due to the millennia of experience with hierarchical structures, and will manifest itself as such if they were granted greater control.

But I also propose that this inheritance may pass along another route: that of Academia. Chapter Three will present the discourses discussed and maintained throughout the twentieth century by historians, anthropologists, literary scholars, and those dispatched to write a report. Although academics may be a less abrasive form of violence, I argue that it results in an effect similar to Arabization, for they both prevent the subjugated voice from speaking for itself. Some part of the Berber population, however, has made their way into the academic institutions that can influence the production of discourse. This, albeit less bloody and overtly discriminatory, way of asserting the authority over one’s discourse however is no guarantee of a fair and equal identity construction, as will be shown in the next Chapter.
CHAPTER THREE.
The Berbers in Academia: socially orienting non-fiction

The texts that I have relied on up to this point stem from a vast collection of contributors. Some of these contributors have been individually introduced and had something of their background described, but many other ideas that have informed this project have been attributed to authors unidentified but for a citation. One can easily relay information from a large body of literature without making a point of discussing the information’s source; however, when one’s topic is a group of living people, and one’s only means of knowing about these people is through secondhand sources—or worse, for my readers; reliance on an amateur interpretation of secondhand sources!—prudently weighing the quality of the accessible information is essential. Without a reflection on the contexts of the works that describe and make assertions about other people, the text itself stands to become an authority on them. Subtly shaping how people are talked about and editing readers’ notions about their identity, texts allow for the subjection of the people they describe, literally designating them as the ‘subject’ of textual discourse. Even knowing basic details about the author’s work, such as the date of publication or the author’s place of origin, can help a reader to consider or evaluate the author’s probable biases. At the very least, knowing some context behind the text helps put a human being, flawed and usually well-intentioned, behind words that can otherwise pretend to be science.

‘Pretending to be science’ is the fault of the author who presents him or herself with such authority, and of the reader who accepts this authority because the author’s words are in print. If text has a great deal of power for the shaping of notions about its ‘subjects,’ then it is the authors’ potential to construct a hierarchy, with intellects as the disseminators of reality and those they describe as accessory to the process, but receivers of its consequences. Orientalism presents a similar idea when Edward Said reflects on the influence of material discourse; “so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism,”1 he asserts. Said’s own work, a text that deconstructs other texts in the postcolonial studies tradition,
may itself contribute to the creation of a discourse that determines how people are talked about, as I argued in Chapter One in regards to postcolonial studies. However, Said and postcolonial studies scholars differ from most authors in that they are conscious of their role in the act of argumentation and description. Often, these authors offer up descriptions of themselves alongside their descriptions of their topic, demystifying the space between reader and writer, which can easily be perceived as the place where ‘truth’ is communicated.

In this Chapter, I also aim to demystify the authors I have relied upon to form my basis of knowledge about the Berbers. If I were to not ‘identify’ to the best of my ability the individual authors who have contributed to this project, over and above discussing the content of their texts, I would be deceiving my readers. The information contained within these works I reference represents only half of what they can contribute to our understanding of the Berbers; the other half is acquired through a critical reading of the texts based on the social context of their authors. This Chapter then turns our gaze to the meta level of this topic’s analysis for another understanding of how the Berbers have been controlled, and how the evolution of self-conscious authors have altered how the Berbers are discussed.

First, I have grouped the relevant books into categories that bring together the authors in a meaningful way. Authors of Berber-related works are first divided between those with a Western background and the non-Westerners who originate close to the regions studied in this project. The Western scholars are then further divided into ethnographers, who have designated guidelines for studying people, and miscellaneous scholars with an interest in Berber studies. Secondly, I attempt to place these authors into the social context in which they are writing, and the one in which they are studying. This takes into consideration the political atmosphere as relates to the Berbers, the state of their disciplinary field at the time of writing, and any relevant aspects of the author’s training or background, including the anticipated reception of their work.

The Europeans who venture into the Berber regions and write about their experiences often relay their admiration of the distinctive qualities of the peoples there. P. Ange Koller O.F.M. (*Essai sur l’esprit du Berbere Marocain*, 1946) enthusiastically
describes the intersection of faiths, cultures, and values found in the Berber regions; Eugene Guernier (La Berberie, l’Islam et la France, 1950), in recounting Berber history, praises their fierce retention of tradition and culture in the face of millennia of subjugation to the rule of another; Jean Servier (Tradition et civilisation berberes: les portes de l’année, 1985) writes about the unique spirituality of the Berbers. In each of these examples, and with most every European text that is a personal account rather than an ethnographic study, the authors feel compelled to justify their respect for the praiseworthy Berber qualities. Guernier feels obliged to write about a “forgotten people.” Servier claims as his rationale. In every case, the Berbers are usually portrayed as the underdogs of North Africa, on whose team the author duly enlists. Having often spent years living intimately among the Berbers, these authors make their work seem as though it is a duty towards the people who deserve more attention than history has afforded them.

It is more than obligation that motivates the work of these authors, though. For the most part, the authors discuss the Berbers with a sense of familiarity. Koller, describing the goal of his book, which reports the years he lived among the Berbers of Morocco, expresses his wishes that his “humble effort” will contribute to making the Berbers “better known and loved, in hopes of bringing them closer to us.”

The notion of “bringing them closer to us” is an especially important one to highlight because it implies the other objective of most close studies. These non-ethnographic studies result in an admiration of the Berbers, conveyed in the authors’ works, but they are conducted in the first place to make comprehensible a people, a culture, a mindset that is perceived as quite far removed from what is familiar to Europeans. The authors accomplish this by framing their depiction of the Berbers through an implied comparison with a European equivalent. The assumed result of this comparison is manifested through the author’s choice of language.

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2 “peuple oublié” (Guernier [1950], p. 11).
3 “sous-développement matériel a été naïvement confondu avec sous-développement spirituel” (Servier [1985], p. vi).
4 “pour les faire mieux connaître et aimer, en vue de les rapprocher de nous” (Koller [1946], p. 20).
Koller, for example, asserts in his introduction that the various Berber groups are “the witnesses of an ancient primitive culture.” They are worthy of European attention because they preserve “pagan traditions” alongside Christian and Jewish ones, as well as alongside their “occasionally uncivilized nature.” Wildness, primitivism, pagan ritual—all are parts of the historic and existing Berber sensibility, Koller claims, evidencing his assumption that the Berbers are developmentally behind his fellow Europeans. Though Koller’s work describes rather than evaluates the Berbers, his choice of lexicon, which may to him seem descriptive, betrays a hierarchy within which the Berbers are placed below Koller’s own position.

Guernier writes a history of the Berber people that similarly invokes this hierarchy, but in his work, it is presented through the recognition of the Berbers’ unique qualities. He describes how Berber societies have produced such well-known figures as Saint Augustine, who had a significant role in the formation of the philosophy of Western Christianity, and Averröes, an Aristotelian philosopher who argued for the reconciliation of religion and philosophy. Each figure he mentions are, in Guernier’s esteem, concerned with the same values: “impenitent rationalism, virtue as inherited from the Greeks […] and] the genius of the freedom in eternally practicing democracy.” Though Guernier’s assessment of the values of the figures he mentions may be accurate, the fact that he praises only the Berber qualities most similar to those of his native France reveals the perspective from which he conducts his survey of Berber history. Interestingly, Guernier does not make explicit whether he has spent the years living among the Berbers that Koller and Servier claim to have. Yet he opens his book with the expressed intention to make the pioneer attempt to write the Berber history “seen from inside.” Perhaps the difference between a history “seen from outside” and from the inside is a matter of attitude; Guernier considers his willingness to highlight the least “primitive” and most comprehensible aspects of Berber history to qualify him as presenting the insider view. The end result is an unstated designation as primitive all that is not in the European tradition.

5 “les témoins d’une ancienne culture primitive” (Koller [1946], p. 19).
6 “leur nature parfois sauvage” (ibid).
7 “un rationalisme impenitent, vertu héritée de la Grèce […] la génie de la liberté dans pratique éternelle de la démocratie” (Guernier [1950], p. 11).
8 “l’orginalité de cet essai sera d’avoir tenté de l’écrire <<vue du dedans>>” (ibid).
The tone of Servier’s work contrasts greatly with that of Koller’s paternalism or Guernier’s ethnocentricity. Instead of these, Servier’s work is meant to turn the European gaze towards a people it has forgotten and neglected. More than a mere recounting of observations, Servier practically dotes on the marvels of the Berber mentality. “I learned to recognize the profound unity of the Algerian mind, despite the diversity of origins of the groups,”9 he reflects. The significance of this quote is twofold: it reveals Servier’s sincere admiration to the point of adulation of the Berber spirituality, and denigrates through implication the past research techniques and widely held beliefs about the Berbers. In this instance, Servier refers to the tendency of past researchers to seek points of distinction amongst the Berber groups. Servier finds that Berber groups may be distinguished one from another, but these distinctions are “futile” considering the commonalities of Berber “thought, their conception of the world and of the place of man in the world.”10

With these reflections, Servier highlights the tendency of European research to make distinctions and draw comparisons. He points directly to the past distinctions made between Berber groups, but he also indirectly reveals his own emphasis on the comparison between a European culture and spirituality and that of the Berbers. “May [the soul of the country folk of the Maghreb] live and find in the splendor of its tradition the strength to support the present and take on the future,”11 he concludes in his introduction. Such generous language is distributed throughout the book, and is quite distinct from even the most affirming language in the work of Koller and Guernier. Unlike Koller’s way of “bringing them closer to us” by explaining primitive behavior to a modern context, Servier brings the occidental mind upwards to be able to understand spiritual perspectives it has neglected to acknowledge.

The difference between the implied hierarchy in Koller and Guernier’s works and Servier’s ability to hold up the Berbers as an example for his fellow Europeans depends

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9 “j’ai appris à connaître l’unité profonde de la pensée algérienne, malgré la diversité d’origines des groupes humains” (Servier [1985], p. vii).
10 “La bipartition des populations berbères […] ne fait que souligner la futilité qu’il y aurait à distinguer les hommes selon qu’ils ont un manteau court ou une tunique longue, sans tenir compte de leur pensée, de leur conception du monde et de la place de l’homme dans le monde” (ibid).
11 “Puissé-t-elle vivre et trouver dans la splendeur de sa tradition la force de supporter le présent et d’affronter l’avenir” (ibid, p. xi).
primarily on the time period in which the authors were studying the Berbers. Koller’s book appeared in 1946, Guernier’s in 1950, and Servier’s in 1985. During the colonial era that informs the writing of authors before Algeria’s war of independence began in 1956, authority over the colonized peoples was assumed. “To the colonialist mind it was always of the utmost importance to be able to say: ‘I know my natives,’ a claim which implied two things at once: (a) that the native was really quite simple and (b) that understanding him and controlling him went hand in hand”\(^{12}\); Koller and Guernier’s works could be perceived in their home countries as a credible account of the Berbers for this reason.

In the 40-year span that separates Koller and Servier, however, Algeria’s bitter war of independence with France had resulted in its subsequently developed ability to stand alone, and its identity distinct from the one its colonizer had imposed. This birthing process, and the maturation of the Algerian identity, was less traumatic on the French psyche than the Algerian, but was nonetheless a systematic shift in how the French viewed their role in the world and their relation to a people no longer officially bound to the colonial dominant-dominated dynamic. Colonialism and imperialism were acquiring negative connotations by the time Servier was writing, as the 1980s saw the emergence of postcolonial studies. Increasingly, because of this, the only voice that could discuss that part of French history was the one that denounced it. Thus, it is clear that all three authors write from perspectives that reflect acceptable beliefs from their proper eras.

Considering this, it is interesting to return to the authors’ need to justify their work under the pretense that their work is especially precedent-setting or is potentially surprising subject matter for their audience. Perhaps, to their credit, the authors were engaging in surprising and unprecedented work simply by bringing to the forefront a people or an aspect of a people that otherwise received little popular attention. But, even in cohabiting with the Berbers, the writers of these works do not stray far from the perspectives prescribed to them by their respective cultures and eras.

The shifts that altered the psyche of the individual authors discussed here and their respective societies occurred within entire academic disciplines as well. Ethnography, a branch of anthropology that emphasizes fieldwork through the collection

qualitative data, clearly displays its evolution as its telling of Berber phenomena adapts to developments inside of academia and without. In the last century, ethnographies of the Berbers reveal the changes in how the Berbers themselves are considered, and the changes within the field of ethnography. Whether these changes affect one another, i.e. whether a tandem progression of societal and academic work is required to achieve shifts in perspectives, is addressed by the ethnographies in this section.

Before examining the work of ethnographers who spent time among the Berbers, it is useful to place them in the context of the basic developments within anthropology. Anthropology became an academic discipline in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Its practice was limited to Europeans whose studies focused exclusively on peoples of what is now called the Third World or the developing world. Anthropologists were in “pursuit of ‘the primitive’”\(^\text{13}\) and, as anthropology was the sole discipline concerned with relaying to the rest of Europe the details of these ‘primitive’ people who had no voice of their own, European anthropologists “shaped and controlled the image of non-Western peoples.”\(^\text{14}\) Most anthropologists of this generation had never been to the places that they described, however. This enabled them to create the reality of the primitive populations based on what logically fit with emerging theories of evolution.

The nature of anthropology began to change around the turn of the century. Anthropological greats Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski championed the importance of fieldwork and developed ethnographic techniques that became standard practice. Both conducted their most groundbreaking research among indigenous peoples: Boas with the American Indians, and Malinowski with the natives of the Trobriand Islands in New Guinea. Boas emphasized synchronic description, or the description of a specific group’s culture at a particular moment in time.\(^\text{15}\) He founded American cultural anthropology based on this practice, which grew out of his recognition of the shortcomings of the ethnographic studies that had thus far formed the corpus of anthropological knowledge. Ethnographers before him had been amateurs, collecting ‘bad data’ due to their lack in training and to their failure to acknowledge that their social

\(^{13}\) Barrett (1996), p. 3
\(^{14}\) ibid
\(^{15}\) Agar (1994), p. 53
position in relation to the people they studied colored how their studies were conducted. Synchronic description is simply the collection of “good data”; description over theory. Malinowski took these concepts a step further by arguing the importance of participant observation. Not only is it important to gather thorough data instead of using observation to complement ethnocentric assumptions, but those data should be collected through participation in the everyday life of the group being studied.\textsuperscript{16}

The real impact of their concepts on their field at large can be seen in the work of later ethnographers in this project; the time it took for these practices to become standard saw the end of colonialism. Berber ethnographers of Koller and Guernier’s generation represented the academic traditions that were only beginning to accommodate the twentieth century advances. These ethonographers, like Robert Montagne in 1930 (\textit{Les Berberes et le Makhzen: essai sur la transformation politique des Berberes sedentaires (groupe chleuh)}, 1930), carried their own, unquestioned, societal values to the places they studied, applying to the people they studied these values that were often incongruent with their native values. Colonial ethnographers in North Africa thus demonstrate some of the rhetoric of the non-ethnographers of that generation. They differ from the colonial non-ethnographers only, and significantly, in that they could be perceived as authorities because of their profession. “The assumption was that their research was objective and value-neutral, which conveniently relieved them from worrying too much about the effect of their studies or the moral basis of the regimes in which they worked”\textsuperscript{17}; for this reason “anthropology has correctly been described as the child of imperialism;”\textsuperscript{18} the presumed ‘truth’ of its findings was a pretentious imposition of the values of the dominant over the silent subjugated.

Anthropology’s reflection of colonial discourse is therefore well-established; Robert Montagne demonstrates the subtle ways that an ethnographic study conducted in a non-reflexive way can communicate the imperialistic values that permitted the Europeans to justify their colonial rule. His study seems neutral enough at the onset: Montagne writes to describe the many elements—historical and current, cultural and foreign—that

\textsuperscript{16} ibid, p. 92
\textsuperscript{17} Barrett (1996), p. 25
\textsuperscript{18} ibid, p. 24
have gone into the creation of the existing political situation in the chleuh Berber region.\textsuperscript{19} He sets up the peculiar contradiction between the democracies that persist in the primitive states there, and the potential within each state for the founding of dynasties by leaders who call upon the loyalty of their constituents to anarchic traditions.\textsuperscript{20} In his words, the interior forces unite “either to form or to destroy”\textsuperscript{21} the fragile kingdoms and empires. Although Montagne’s study provides many examples of how this is true currently and historically, he sets up his relaying of these truths as though they are a story, perhaps trivializing the real plight of the people he describes.

Yet although Montagne makes a compelling case for why this study is worthwhile, one must further inquire as to why he pursued this topic in the first place. What brings an ethnographer to a particular study is often telling as to how the study will be conducted, and how the results will be presented. Montagne’s motivations are rather easy to discover because he makes them explicit in his introduction: a French military official, Marshall Lyautey, to whom the book is respectfully dedicated, assigned him to the region so he could present a report of the chleuh situation to the French military. His position in Morocco thus influences his ability to conduct his study as a disinterested researcher.

Although Montagne is obligated by the nature of his discipline to consider the people at hand as objectively as possible, his social context of colonial-era France and his position in its military obligate him to give preference to the colonial interest of his state. The justification for colonization and for the continued need of the French protectorate in Morocco, as they were certainly part of a discourse, had shaped Montagne’s reality and how he could perceive the Berbers. The conflict between consciously or unconsciously giving preference to one’s socially-instilled values at the expense of scholarly standards exists for all ethnographers. The struggle of modern ethnographers is to recognize the socialized aspects of themselves that are imposed upon their study and that consequently

\textsuperscript{19} For a map of the various Berber regions, see appendix A.
\textsuperscript{20} “Une étonnante contradiction domine la vie sociale et l’histoire des populations de l’Afrique du Nord […] D’une part, en effet, les tribus sédentaires ou nomades de la Berbérie […] s’attachent à faire respecter dans leurs États primitifs des institutions démocratiques ou oligarchiques. […] D’autre part, nous savons qu’il s’est toujours élevé, au sein de ces tribus, fidèles à leurs lois traditionales …” (Montagne [1930], p. vii).
\textsuperscript{21} “des forces intérieures, unies tantôt pour les former, tantôt pour les détruire” (ibid, p. viii).
influence the way it is conducted and its results. Boas bemoans this dilemma in stating that his “whole outlook on social life is determined by this question: How can we recognize the shackles that tradition has laid upon us? For when we recognize them, we are also able to break them.”

One must wonder how Montagne’s position among the chleuh Berbers affects his inferences on subjects pertaining to them. His affiliation with the French would determine the way the Berbers interact with him, and his own ability to comprehend them would be handicapped by viewing them through his own social perspective. An example of the product of Montagne’s colonialist perspective is a sentence such as “up until the establishment of the French Protectorat, (italics added) we can see existing [in Morocco] an isolated empire, half hit by weakness, agitated by the crises of dynasties and tribal revolts, either torn apart by disorder or united by the energetic action of a sovereign.” Montagne sees the necessity of the colonial presence in Morocco and the chaos of non-Western civilization, whether or not they exist, because his social background and the motivation of his study predispose him to.

If the observations that Montagne makes are quite influenced by a perception that is surely biased, as well as limited to a specific time and place, what, then, is the knowledge worth that Montagne gathers? Is it true? Does he pretend that it is? Who is his intended audience, and is his writing useful to them? Is his writing useful to us? Although subsequent ethnographers in this section are from more recent societies with less apparent predisposed ideas about the cultures they study, these questions remain relevant.

One ethnographer especially aware of the implications of these questions, and more exemplary of the practices developed by Boas and Malinowski, is Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu takes synchronic description a step further; a founding principle of Bourdieu’s work stresses the necessity of taking the author’s words in the context of the author’s social background, as well as in the context of the scientific modes of production in which they were generated. For Bourdieu, the value of an ethnographic study is that it

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22 in Agar (1994), p. 50
23 “En effet, jusqu’à l’établissement du Protectorat français, nous pouvons y voir vivre un empire isolé, à demi frappé d’impuissance, agité à la fois par les crises dynastiques et les révoltes des tribus, tantôt déchiré par le désordre, tantôt unifié par l’action énergique d’un soverain” (Montagne [1930], p. viii).
offers a description not only of the people in a specific time and place, but also of the social space from which the ethnographer comes, as well as of the field of ethnography in the time and place from which the work is written. It is this to which Bourdieu refers when he discusses the shift from reading to understand the *opus operatum* to reading to understand the *modus operandi*.

Bourdieu’s career as a highly influential sociologist began with his ethnographies of the Kabyle Berbers in the 1960s (*Algeria 1960*, 1979). His research coincided with the increased unrest in Algeria as it braced itself for full-fledged revolt. Bourdieu’s work in Algeria was indicative of another kind of revolt as well, an academic one, as he began to point out the paradoxes of having Western scholars study, rule over, and impose social structures and cultural values on non-Western peoples. He could acknowledge the folly in the colonial and academic expectation of “the man of pre-capitalist societies to start by converting himself into a ‘developed’ man in order to be able to enjoy the economic advantages of a ‘developed’ economy.” In this way, Bourdieu writing in the 1960s was already something of a postcolonial scholar, as the realization that Western models cannot fit non-Western peoples characterizes the academic work of many such social scientists in the late twentieth century.

Bourdieu’s ethnographic essays thus seek to present the models of the Kabyle Berbers. In “The Disenchantment of the World,” Bourdieu describes the foundations of the Kabyle economy. “Adaptation to an economic and social order,” Bourdieu states, “presupposes an ensemble of knowledges transmitted by diffuse or formal education.” Without the same socialization process as a French person, an Algerian could hardly be expected to demonstrate frenchness or to properly adapt to the systems proposed or imposed by colonialism. Bourdieu thus suggests that people who have not received this same socialization live by a different social reality, with possibilities for success in ways of which the French had not conceived. In acknowledging the existence of a different reality within the people he studies, and an inability to conform to the rational social order practiced by his own society, how does Bourdieu advise that an ethnographer conduct a study? He writes:

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24 Bourdieu 1979, p. 1
25 ibid, p. 7
...one cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality, historically situated and dated, but only in order to construct it as an instance (cas de figure) in a finite universe of possible configurations.²⁶

As he writes subsequent essays on “The Sense of Honor” and “The Kabyle House,” then, Bourdieu simply offers his understanding of local rules and customs, based on a number of empirical examples. A judgment of the “rationality” of these customs is withheld as completely as possible, and he tries to use language that is neutral.

This effort towards neutrality contrasts significantly with the work of the non-ethnographers analyzed earlier in this chapter. It is indicative of a movement away from the imperialism of the ‘bestowed approval’ in Koller and Guernier’s work, and the response of over-acceptance in Servier’s. To follow the evolution of ethnology, however, the challenge to neutrality demands recognition of, rather than a lack of attention to, what is subsequently perceived as a detrimental relationship between dominator and dominated, colonizer and colonized. This marks the move towards the socially conscious ethnographer, a progression seen next.

Thus, the current ethnographic trend demonstrates the theory and practice in Bourdieu’s work while challenging its neutrality. Daniel A. Wagner’s study (Literacy, Culture, and Development: Becoming Literate in Morocco, 1993) demonstrates this new standard as he carefully reflects on the research process, but also on its motivation and its projected results. The subject of the 10-year study is literacy, a term that has special currency within Wagner’s own society, often indicating economic stability, the standard of living, and the success of the educational structure.

Drawing upon Bourdieu’s theory of practice, Wagner discusses his role as a researcher. He details his research process in the preface, including how he decided, based on his personal background, to engage in the Moroccan Literacy Project (MLP), a project that evaluated the various factors, including Berber’s linguistic stigma and Berber bilingualism, that contribute to illiteracy in Morocco.²⁷ He presents the other members of his research team: where they came from, their educational background, their relation to Wagner, and why they were interested in the project. This gives a human feel to the

²⁶ Bourdieu in Calhoun, LiPuma, & Postone 1993, p. 272
²⁷ See Chapter Two, p. 31-2
MLP. In unveiling the identities of the researchers, it also demystifies the research by turning the study into an event or even a story, rather than a presentation of timeless facts, observations, and data found in ethnographies of earlier eras. Wagner later devotes an entire chapter to describing his team’s fieldwork and the process of gathering data, further elucidating the function of the research team in the quality of the data they eventually present. In this chapter, he puts the MLP in the context of other work on the subject. He states, “Given our intention to work in Morocco, we found it of particular interest that so little research had been done on the cultural functions of literacy in developing countries.”

He also describes the problems his team had in finding relevant methodological approaches for addressing their research questions. Wagner’s thoughtful documentation of the ethnographic process results in such analyses as:

To understand the impact of Quranic preschooling on beginning reading ability, for example, seemed to call for the relatively simple research strategy of comparing children who did and did not attend such preschools. In reality, this problem was not so trivial, for it required access to Quranic schools, new methods for evaluating children’s reading skills using Quranic texts, bi- and trilingual researchers, and so forth. It soon became clear that creating appropriate methods was going to be a major part of project work.

Bourdieuian methodology, which holds that reflexivity is the “fundamental condition for the progress of scientificity in the social sciences,” clearly drives the research of the MLP team.

Wagner also relies on the legacy of Bourdieu in devoting a large portion of his book to the discussion of the social space in which the Moroccans are situated. This is done through investigations into the various contexts in which education, especially elementary education, is conducted there. He asks the following questions that deal with the “cultural functions” he mentions above: What are the cultural perceptions of school in Morocco, including religious, economic, and other social factors? How is one taught to read there? What social or cultural factors might incline a person to remain illiterate, such as poverty or dropping out of school, and why do these factors exist? With these

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29 ibid, p. 64
30 Bourdieu in Calhoun, LiPuma, & Postone (1993), p. 274
questions, Wagner paints a picture of the social space in which Moroccans become literate or remain illiterate.

However, Wagner strays from the Bourdieuan tradition. His study, besides just examining a cultural phenomenon and how it is understood by his own society, intentionally focuses on a subject that could provoke a response that alters the conditions he observes. Wagner’s topic addresses a “problem,” defined as such on several levels. Illiteracy itself is considered a problem because it is associated with notions of being uncivilized or impoverished; this connotation is “sometimes reinforced by agencies determined, in their own words, to ‘stamp out’ or ‘eradicate’ illiteracy.”31 Another problem is defining literacy: specialists “argue over which tests [are] most appropriate, most valid, most psychometrically sound;” debates “revolve around such issues as what specific abilities or knowledge reflect literacy ability.”32 The third problem is determining how to appropriately respond, after deciding whether illiteracy is a problem and how literacy is defined.

Based on these three problems, Wagner undertakes his ethnographic project, which deals with the societal issues related to the third problem. The appropriateness of the response requires knowing which actions will be most effective within the specific case of Morocco. Wagner’s analysis of the cultural functions of literacy do not lead to particular conclusions, however; they are meant to be interpreted and applied by “social scientists, educators, policymakers, and interested laypersons.”33 In identifying his intended audience, Wagner avoids a pitfall found in ethnographic studies that are written as though their true descriptions will be granted unmitigated consideration. Instead, Wagner recognizes that his work will only be applied to a certain extent, even amongst the audience he identifies. “The success of a project (and a book) like this one will reside, then, in its ability to appeal to individuals with rather different outlooks on what counts in literacy and education, without falling (too far) between the proverbial chairs,”34 he states. Wagner has conducted his study with the goal of reaching a specific audience who has the ability to affect changes based on his study. His statement reveals

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31 Wagner (1993), p. 2
32 ibid, p. 2
33 ibid, p. 268
34 ibid, p. 269
how ethnography has progressed past the social spaces of the studied and the studier to encompass the potential repercussions to the studied, whose reality may change as a result of the ethnography, and to the studiers, whose field constantly changes when they attempt to appeal to a proposed audience.

Wagner, along with the other authors considered in this chapter so far, demonstrate how the quality and effectiveness of a work are related in part to the author’s choice of audience. Most of the authors and ethnographers examined up to this point have written in a way that appeals to a demographic within their own home culture. Some styles seem more directed toward a general audience, like that of Koller and Servier. Others write with a disciplinary or otherwise special interest group in mind: Guernier writes in the style of historians or sociologists; Bourdieu and Montagne write to other scholars in their field and to those that commissioned their studies. The content of texts coming from the colonial era went largely uncontested, even though their biased perspectives are now easily recognizable, because the readers at that time were considering the texts from perspectives rooted in the same social space as the authors’.

Revisiting the questions posed after examining Montagne’s work, then, is the knowledge gained in a context where both the author and the reader share biased perspectives in relation to the subject of the study worthy knowledge? These sorts of questions are necessary but difficult to ask since they encourage the critical reading of texts while making any ‘knowledge’ suspect and tenuous. Does each text, with the distance of time, become as easily critiqued or even obsolete when its revealed biases discredit the knowledge therein? Or, can the knowledge it presents be divorced from these biases and retain its usefulness?

Questions that deal with the believability and usefulness of the knowledge presented by individual authors become more nuanced when considering a different set of authors and texts: the ‘native intellectual.’ The term ‘native’ and ‘intellectual’ must be qualified for their uses in this section. The authors about to be discussed have personal heritages tied to the region that has been the focus of this chapter’s works. Only one of the three is actually ‘Berber;’ I have some reservations about lumping three individuals under the category of ‘native,’ because using the term in this way perpetuates the lumping together of all non-Western peoples that has defined Western scholarship for so
long. My reasoning for doing this will become clear, though. Secondly, the term ‘intellectual’ is also quite subjective, and in this case it refers to individuals who participate in the Academy, either because they attended a university or they are currently a university professor.

The significance of native intellectuals, then, is their supposed ability to represent their compatriots more authentically. By having grown up in the culture they discuss in their writings, they can give a voice to those who have previously been voiceless in European academics. This is certainly an important advance considering that crafting and conveying the image of non-Westerners has been the specific responsibility of Westerners. At certain points in history, it would have been an “absurdity” to imagine “natives” engaged in this kind of work. The native intellectual, debuting relatively recently in European academia, contributes to the scholarly body of knowledge in which European scholars participate and dominate. Whether they can offer particular insights to the knowledge otherwise accumulated by Westerners alone depends on Westerners’ perceptions of the usefulness of their information. They can establish their usefulness through the credibility of their ‘nativeness,’ or by writing on a level that competes with the level on which Western intellectuals write.

The first of these native intellectuals achieves both. Youssef Nacib, editor of an anthology of poetry from Kabylia (Anthologie de la Poesie Kabyle, 1994) writes an extensive “introductive study” about the historical traditions and trends in Kabyle poetry, the social context in which the poetic trends were set, and the lives of major poets. The structure of this portion, the first third, of his anthology resembles the style found in Savignac’s work. Nacib’s writing could arguably be even more professional and systematic than Savignac’s. His first chapter, for example, is dedicated to transcription, a subject that most scholars address only as a postscript. Nacib cites precedent scholars who have dealt with the transcription problem, presents the difficulties in transcription, and discusses various ways to best transcribe Berber and Arabic characters into the corresponding French characters. Throughout his 160-page introduction, Nacib’s work proves to be logically structured and rhetorically sound.

Barrett (1996), p. 3
Beyond just proving his intellectual parity with Western analyses of similar subject matter, Nacib lends special credibility to his work by relying primarily on other such native intellectuals. A majority of the sources he draws upon in this text are also of Arab descent. The need for local expertise in this area is obvious; the translation, transcription, and cultural interpretation of folk poetry would not only be easier for, but would be more meaningful to someone to whom the language is natural and for whom the poems have personal cultural significance. In light of this, the fact that Westerners have ever attempted works on similar subjects seems incomparably insufficient.

This idea illustrates the usefulness of nativeness, the second reason that native intellectuals make a place for themselves within Western academia. This is further reinforced in the body of Nacib’s anthology. The massive corpus of poetry could only have been compiled by a person especially knowledgeable in the traditions of Kabyle poetry, as well as well-connected to a community that can aid in the recovery of poems that were only recently written down, if at all. The poems in this anthology go back as far as the eighteenth century, and up to the present day. The life and work of many of the more recent poets are described in biographies beside their poems. Perhaps any devoted scholar of Kabyle poetry, which Nacib surely is, can undertake a task of this enormity, but because of Nacib’s ties with the region to which he is native, he likely had more access to help and to information than a non-native would. This access ascribes credibility to Nacib’s collection, thus ensuring its place as an authoritative resource alongside, or even surpassing, equivalent Western works.

A second book by Aida Adib Bamia (The Graying of the Raven, 2001) achieves similar ends by analyzing the work of only one Algerian folk poet. She establishes her credibility as a scholar by setting the work of the poet Muhammad bin al-Tayyib Alili in a sociopolitical context. Setting the context then allows Bamia to argue for the significance and relevance of Alili’s poetry. The context of Alili’s poetry can be understood by explaining the folk poetry tradition from which he comes. Bamia spends a chapter discussing the history of the malhun, a term that encompasses a linguistic tendency among the indigenous populations in Algeria’s middle ages that evolved to its present association with oral poetry performance. Malhun has a political connotation, because it developed when the Arabs imposed their language upon the indigenous
peoples of the Maghreb. *Malhun* allowed these people to play with Arabic’s rules of grammar and vocalization, giving the Berbers a “psychological boost,” “freeing them from formal Arabic’s linguistic restrictions.”

She goes on to explain the empowering nature of *malhun*:

If we consider folk poetry a means to channel the feelings of the “powerless against the powerful” [...], then the ability to challenge the norms of the language and overcome obstacles must have been a kind of cultural equalizer and a source of revenge for those who could not otherwise have raised their voices.

Bamia’s ability to discern the potency of the medium of folk poetry makes it clear that she is more than an astute scholar. Bamia has personally connected with the *malhun* tradition and Alili’s poetry specifically. Analyzing the methodology that brought her to write on this topic further brings to light Bamia’s character as a scholar.

A collector and fan of Alili’s poetry entrusted Bamia with his collected works, but she felt unworthy of analyzing and publishing them without understanding how to faithfully convey and preserve their meaning. As part of her endeavor, Bamia came to an Algerian university in the 1970s to teach a course on folklore. To her surprise, she found that no printed material existed for her coursework. Her first task, therefore, was to teach her students the theories of fieldwork and send them to eastern Algeria to collect folk literature. Her project happened to coincide with a nationwide promotion of folklore; “one of many efforts intended to contribute to a definition of Algerian identity.” Bamia and her resulting work were attuned to Algerian national interest, developed in her students an appreciation for their folk heritage and accomplished her own objective of supplying the context for Alili’s poems during her 11-year stay in Algeria. The comprehensive effects of her efforts to engage Algerian culture demonstrate an investment absent in most scholarly literature. It is this investment, perhaps, that permits Bamia’s empathetic interpretation of Alili’s sociopolitical context.

The way that Bamia establishes credibility, however, differs from the way Lahene Seriak, a third native intellectual, does. His creation of a French-Tamazight guide (*Dire*...
et Comprendre Tamazight, 2004) provides a useful tool that, at this stage where Tamazight is just beginning to emerge as a legitimized language and field of study, could hardly be created by a non-native speaker of Tamazight or any of the other Berber dialects. Seriak prefaces the dictionary itself with a survey of the language’s history and its role in the past and present livelihoods of its speakers. This preface includes some of the most recent developments in Tamazight’s political status, reinforcing its general usefulness as a guide to the language.

More than just useful, the book demonstrates a degree of pride in the Tamazight language. The historical survey iterates the presence of Tamazight despite its constant subordination in favor of the tongue of whichever outside group was ruling the land of the indigenous peoples. Seriak discusses Tamazight’s role through the modern era and how, for example, it afforded its speakers a degree of autonomy and resistance in colonial times that eventually helped Algerians secure their independence. Since the French scorned popular literature, it remained virtually unknown to them. The French “administration and colonial police” attributed little significance to “what this or that poet could sing in a market or in a café,”40 while meanwhile, these ‘poets’ were masking messages of resistance in their public recitations. Today, Tamazight remains subordinated, which Serviak recognizes wrongs its speakers. “A people that keeps as its ‘identifying, original’ language the ‘identifying and original’ language of another people cannot be and will never be able to be a free people,”41 he claims. He also rebukes the statute of May 2002, which declares Tamazight a national and constitutional language, for incorrectly portraying Tamazight as never having been the language of civilization.42 Each bit of commentary like this confirms Seriak’s identification with the language.

Yet, can this book be considered a viable resource for Westerners? Seriak’s efforts are commendable because focusing on Tamazight promotes the emerging political activity supporting it. Berber languages like Tamazight, as established in the previous

40 “La littérature de résistance à la colonization […] a été continue et efficace. Efficace peut-être parce que cette littérature populaire […] a échappé à l’emprise de l’administration et de la police coloniales. On ne considérait pas que c’était très important de voir ce que tel poète pouvait chanter dans un marché ou un café” (Seriak [2004], p. 18).
41 “Un peuple qui tient pour sa langue ‘identitaire, originelle’ la langue ‘identitaire et originelle’ d’un autre peuple ne peut pas et ne pourra jamais être un peuple LIBRE” (ibid, cover).
42 “le statut est le suivant: cette langue est considérée comme une espèce de séquelle qui n’a jamais servi […] en tant que langue de civilisation (ce qui est une grossière erreur historique)” (ibid, p. 10).
chapter, have only recently been codified, and are even more recently receiving widespread public attention in the interest of preserving them. Dictionaries that make them accessible to a larger population are likely rare at this point. Yet, on the whole, this book provides little more than a convenient compilation of information with a patriotic bent. From an outsider’s point of view, I would find little merit in this book, due to its concise historic survey, its incomplete dictionary, and its unprofessional insertion of patriotism. Serviak fails to capitalize on his positions of intellectual or of native.

Earlier, I stated that I would discuss why my use of the word ‘native’ is illuminating to this study despite, or perhaps because of, its ethnocentric and potentially racist implications. The case of Seriak makes this designation interesting, as he is the only of the authors discussed who is native to the homeland and heritage of the Berbers. The ‘nativeness’ of Nacib, Bamia, and Seriak have little to do with their actual backgrounds, and more to do with how they are perceived in the Western Academy that accepts and uses the knowledge they cultivate. Their ‘nativeness’ is only such because of the principles of orientalism, discussed in an earlier chapter. To clarify, Nacib is a non-Berber ‘native’ to Algeria. Bamia, ‘native’ to Palestine, has lived and taught in Florida since 1985, besides the 11 years she spent in Algeria. Seriak is the only ‘native’ Berber in the group. This does not mean that he is a good reflection of the Berber mind. Although his text has a patriotic tone, he does not even curry favor with Berber nationalist groups. A supporter of a Berber independence movement writes “There are many Kabyles at the service of the heart of the powerful […] take the case of Lahene Seriak who never misses a chance to openly thwart the Kabyle Citizen Movement.”

Seriak, the most native of all the authors studied in this chapter, should offer the most credible account of his people. Instead, some among the people he represents find him to be an unfaithful representative of themselves and what they value, to the point of targeting him by name on a website that presents the political and social concerns of the Kabyle Berbers. Bamia, on the other hand, is the least native to any Berber region or to Algeria, yet hers seems to me to be the most thorough, sensitive, and potent of the works studied here. This begs the question of whether the credibility lent by nativeness is worth

43 “il y’a beaucoup de Kabyles de service au sein du pouvoir ou relais du pouvoir (prenez le cas de lahene seriak qui ne rate aucune occasion pour contrecarrer le mouvement citoyen Kabyle ouvertement” (“Ferhat et le MAK reçus au Département d’Etat amériain [13 Dec. 2003]).
more than the credibility lent by less measurable factors such as personal investment and level of connection to the subject matter.

It seems valuable to group these three authors together; surely their backgrounds afford them special insights that are impossible to achieve even for the most thorough and devoted ethnographers. From a linguistic perspective this may be true, as language is nuanced in a way that makes nearly impossible a comprehension of its connotative value, and all of these authors have a native grasp of Arabic, if not of Berber. Yet the same nuanced nature exists for culture. Nacib writes about the meaning of eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century poems from the early 1990s. Bamia explores the world of one poet from a national background and academic training that sets her in another world from Alili. Seriak, even in writing about his native tongue, differs from the political leanings of many of his co-combatants for language rights. Thus any non-native, whether from a different country, time period, political leaning, or worldview from the people they study, would necessarily misrepresent that culture if they attempted to explain it in its entirety. This creates the only certain link between these three authors, although they share this quality with all the authors studied in this chapter. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain who is qualified to give an account of the ‘true’ Berber situation, whether past or present, literary or political, because claims to expertise and nativeness alike have been shown to be incomplete.

The value of accounts from the ‘native intellectual’ becomes more questionable in light of the intellectual quality of the work they produce. The other term I qualified in order to group these three authors together was ‘intellectual,’ but this one is almost as problematic as the first. The ‘native intellectual,’ according to my original conception of this categorization, distinguished these individuals from the majority of their compatriots. The rest of the Berber populations are associated throughout history with ‘folk’ mentalities, even after they escape the colonial labels like ‘primitive’ and ‘savage.’ Indigenous to North Africa, nomadic by nature, and carrying on the folk traditions of their ancestors, the Berbers, according to scholarly literature, are by their nature inclined to live in ways that render them incompatible with Western values. While colonial non-ethnographers and early anthropologists implied in their writing that this incompatibility was a shortcoming, today’s literature takes a more sensitive approach: their ways are pure
and natural, and indigenous peoples should thus be afforded the freedom to carry on with these lifestyles.

According to this line of thinking, it seems as though it is the exception, or—more importantly—that it should be the exception, for non-Westerners and especially indigenous peoples, to adopt and participate in Western structures. Many of the universities in North Africa were established during colonial rule, or have been since established to permit Algerians and Moroccans to be competitive and relevant in a Western-dominated world. Chapter Two revealed how this Westernization is leading to an increased awareness of the significance of indigenous sensibilities, while also leading to their obsolescence. Or, as Fanon writes: “At the very moment when the native intellectual is anxiously trying to create a cultural work he fails to realize that he is utilizing techniques and language which are borrowed from the stranger in his country.”

The native intellectual can therefore be portrayed not only as the exception to the Berber majority, but as a menace to it!

Important anthropologists of the twentieth century have taken this position, and have gone another step by invoking the sense of the tragedy of Westernizing. Robert Murphy states, “The penetration of Western society into every recess of the planet has doomed primitive cultures.” His statement, interestingly, could have been similarly stated a century earlier with a positive connotation. This attests to the remarkable shift in perspective that has occurred in the twentieth century. But is it necessarily a positive shift? Stanley Barrett offers a response to Murphy’s grievance that provides a valuable answer to scholarly reactions to the idea of the native intellectual. He writes, “One might wonder whether citizens of the Third World would draw a different conclusion; namely, that anthropologists would like their societies to remain frozen in time, the intellectual and romantic toys of Western academics.” Barrett’s insight reminds readers that Berbers are not frozen in time, and likely desire that fate as little as any society that is experiencing progress.

44 Fanon in Mazrui (1998), p. 61
45 Murphy in Barrett (1996), p. 27
46 Barrett (1996), p. 27
Written knowledge about the Berbers that comes from Westerners or from ‘native intellectuals’ are therefore of limited use to Berbers themselves. We also now know that our understanding of the Berbers is comprised of socially biased, academically determined, and culturally peripheral sources. The premise of this chapter was to question the worth of the knowledge that informs our understanding of this North African people. While I hope my readers can concede the need for a propensity to question the accuracy and completeness of the works they study as a result of this chapter, I would have accomplished little if I left it at that. It is essential to acknowledge the potential flaws within each work studied here, but it is equally important to recognize that flawed work has a role in the production of the society it describes and the society that makes the description. Flawed work perpetuates the existing relationship between the two or helps to create a new relationship between the two; in either case, the books themselves, beyond the disciplines that they belong to, are history, politics, and anthropology. They tell us through implication about the perceptions, prejudices, efforts at reconciliation, and breakdowns in communication between the Berbers and the societies that are fascinated by them. These works retain their usefulness, therefore, because they communicate between the lines their complicity in the lives of the Berbers.

As a people who have scarcely defended or presented themselves to a world that has done the speaking for them, the Berbers apparently have preserved a singular identity as it has been painted in changing colors to the world around them. Today, the indefatigably adaptive Berber culture and language is recognized by those very painters as threatened. The cause, nature, and outcome of this threat can be best understood by admitting the complicity of the West and Western academics in the problem. Complicity encompasses not only the recognition and creation of the problem, as have been discussed throughout this chapter, but also the ability to resolve it. Chapter Four will discuss the lengths that must be taken to reconcile the insufficiencies of Western hierarchical discourses and Western academic works with their unique potential to discover and describe ways to bring about a restorative solution.
CHAPTER FOUR.
Self-aware storytelling: decolonization

The authorities responsible for bringing to light all of the information that illuminates the topic at hand, whether anthropologist, missionary, literary scholar, poet, diplomat, dictator, Berber, Arab, French, dominator, or dominated, all share one skill in the relating of information: we are all editors. By selectively including and excluding the information we present, and the order in which it is presented, we have hoped to render a particular image of the people of the Maghreb. This subjective and goal-oriented manner of presenting information, despite its having bearing on real people, is certainly inevitable and, in light of this inevitability, is our responsibility to craft, intentionally and attentively. As authorities, we have the capability of furthering a specific agenda through the way that we order the facts we present and the way we formulate our implicit and explicit arguments.

Thus, as editors with a predisposition to present information that has an agenda, the work of this cohort, representing several centuries, empires, nations, and disciplines, has sought to accomplish certain tasks as we discuss the various histories of the people of the Maghreb. Inducing forgetfulness is one essential component in the recounting of any history: what is left out and what is understated about the past are done so as to avoid an intended audience’s becoming distracted from the elements that will lead them to consider the present in a certain way. My own representation of the histories in the Maghreb described in this project—that of the Berbers’ long-suffering tolerance of outside rule in their land and of their enduring language and culture, that of Morocco and Algeria’s colonial struggles, that of the paradoxical Arabization process, and even that of the evolution of academic disciplines such as anthropology—has invariably relied upon the selective ‘remembering’ I contend is essential to the formulation of history, and further, of discourse. Namely, I have situated these historical occurrences beside each other in a way that shows how easily a dominant group can reconfigure popular ‘stories’ in order to support the paradigm that maintains their authority. I do not apologize for my manipulation of real occurrences in hopes of a certain kind of consideration of their
implications: indeed, I believe I would have abused my privilege as an authority for my readers to have done otherwise.

The precedent for the tendency to induce forgetfulness is quite apparent, if one begins to search for evidence of it throughout history. To take an example from this project, the repression of the Berber language and culture on the part of the Arabs, so newly free from a similar oppression under the French, was an astonishing overlooking of the events of their recent past. The dominant discourse that established a sense of identity for the Arabs almost necessitated the forgetting of this past, and the subsequent exclusion of the people that had shared in their struggle against the colonizers. In an attempt to rewrite the national history of independent Morocco and Algeria so as to negate its position of subjugation to France, the policies that asserted the Arab essence of these nations obscured the previous solidarity that had united the ‘colonized,’ whether Berber or Arab.

But those responsible for defining the independent nations in these terms, and for perpetuating the essentialist dogma that construed the Berber role within them as a periphery or parasitic one, can hardly be blamed: this tactic has been principal in the formation of a national narrative. Political philosopher Ernest Renan corroborates this idea, stating, “Forgetting, and even historical error, are essential factors in the creation of a nation, and it is thus that the progress of historical studies is often a danger to nationality.” 1 If all the ‘facts’ of a nation’s history could be revealed without bias, it would, in other words, be detrimental to one’s sense of belonging.

The impossibility of such a scenario, however, makes it important to identify what is generally expected from a historical account, and what is instead present in such an account because it is narrated by humans. ‘Narrative,’ compared with ‘history,’ carries a subjective connotation. History may be described as a sequence of cause and effect relationships that progress in a direction that is unilateral. History happens regardless of tellers; it is inevitable and unstoppable. Narrative, on the other hand, is necessarily imbued with purpose because narrative implies a narrator. Narrative is recounted because it communicates to its hearers; it has a voice and an intent that binds its telling to

1 “L’oubli, et je dirai même l’erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la création d’une nation, et c’est ainsi que le progrès des études historiques est souvent pour la nationalité un danger” (Renan [1997], p. 13).
the teller. It thus interprets, rather than recounts, events, giving them an explication, an entertainment value, a sense of urgency, a symbolic quality, a moral, or perhaps an expectation of response. There is no pretense that narrative presents an account that is separate from the humans or the human qualities it describes, communicates to, or is told by.

Thinking of historical events as only accessible through their narrated, human interpretations may undermine their legitimacy in the eyes of those seeking to know the truth about what has transpired in the past, but I would instead offer that acknowledging the narrative quality of human history makes it more useful in the quest to understanding human societies. Paul Ricoeur argues:

... human existence is itself narrative [...] The meaning of human existence is not just the power to change or master the world, but also the ability to be remembered and recollected in narrative discourse, to be *memorable*. These existential and historical implications of narrativity are very far-reaching, for they determine what is to be ‘preserved’ and rendered ‘permanent’ in a culture’s sense of its own past, of its own ‘identity.’

Thus, discerning the manner in which historical events are presented is a more enlightening activity than learning ‘what happened’ because of its capacity to reveal the values of the storytellers.

Readers of national histories should be particularly aware of the storytelling device of the ‘antagonist,’ also called the ‘other’ throughout this project. The existence of an ‘other’ reinforces its corresponding qualities in the ‘us’ side of the dichotomy that defines the other as such. This is how the other serves to valorize the ‘self’; for example, “Just as the underdeveloped Other has tribes, We, the developed Self have nations or peoples [...] We, Self, speak languages. They, the Other, speak only dialects, vernaculars, or patois.” Thus, similar to forgetfulness’ usefulness in indicating, by implication, the priorities of a particular storyteller, the function of an other is to reveal, also by highlighting what is supposedly absent in the self, that which is most important to the self.

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Yet perpetuating this notion of the other, because it relies on this negative definition, is alienating in a way that becomes clear when the ‘other’ asserts itself, violating its prescribed narrative role. Beyond alienating one group from its ‘other,’ negative definition alienates the ‘us’ group from itself, for their self-definition becomes reliant on the rejection of an imagined ‘otherness,’ which is in other words a rejection of their own imagined reality of the other. In the case of the Battle of Algiers, for example, the French responsible for maintaining control over the colonies resorted to torture as a means of upholding the ‘otherness’ that motivated their mission civilisatrice, so essential to their justification for colonisation. Their ability to detach to this degree from the human interests of the Algerians was perhaps an indicator that, in torturing them, they were instead drowning and administering electric shock to ideologies and qualities that posed a threat to the viability of their own. This masochism saw as its consequence the fall of France’s Fourth Republic, for it revealed the lengths to which these French authorities would go in order to preserve its national narrative. In asserting their existence apart from the French narrative, the Algerians that participated in the Revolution caused an identity crisis in the French. The Revolution revealed that the French had largely ‘created’ the colonized Algerian in terms opposite to themselves, consequently necessitating a rewriting of the French narrative.

Discussing the crisis within the French paradigm appropriately redirects the focus of these considerations away from the dominant discourse’s effects on the marginalized group alone. Perhaps this is only appropriate after a thorough exposure to the interests of the marginalized group, but at some point it is important to be able to acknowledge the limits of one’s ability to address these interests, as they are understood in part out of their function as the negative to the dominant discourse, and as such are dependant upon a careful consideration and deconstruction of the dominant culture that produces the plight of the marginalized, causing, maintaining, and seeking to resolve it. This deconstruction can happen by acknowledging that discourse, national narrative, disciplinary perspectives, and other similar constructs equally influence the group that supposedly controls their creation, for this group also functions within systems that are ruled by predetermined, dominant discourses. For this reason, the categories of ‘dominator’ and
‘dominated’ should even be seen as mutable, as they are true only by degrees, and are in any case fluid.

Crisis comes when one encounters this mutability, and discovers that one’s self-perception is in flux because implicit in a larger context. What ought to be asked in times of identity crisis and re-‘writing’ in order for a nation—or an individual—to prevent the continued alienation caused by negative definition, is how one’s identity benefited because of what was excluded from one’s narrative, and because of what was deemed ‘negative’ in the ‘other.’ For example: what parts of our nation’s history have been glossed over? What qualities do our enemies and those ‘unlike us’ supposedly embody? Once identified, I believe these motivations will reveal that the drive for self-assertion is essentially absurd, for the cost of achieving it necessarily lessens the value of the identity of real, and not imagined, people.

Nations, differentiating from states, participate in the perpetually refined search for collective identity, an identification that is based upon arbitrary factors like language, location, ethnicity, and race. These self-identifications are, whether implicitly or explicitly, posed in opposition to others within these arbitrary categories; thus self-identification itself relies upon the existence of others. The existence of the other is thus implicit in the existence of the self. In failing to acknowledge the complicity on an individual and a national level with these others, one may succeed in preserving a sought-after self-identity. But this self-identity is too frequently ‘actualized’ at the expense of another’s ability to self-define. Mark McPhail in fact contends that, “the assertion of a distinct identity is a fundamental principle of racism.”

To avoid such destructive effects of othering, I instead offer an alternative to this way of considering oneself—with a non-self-identity—that accepts one’s placement within a reality intersected by its many interactions with other realities. The acceptance of this complicity offers a reconciliation between the Berbers and the larger world that seeks to forget them in the national narratives, to define them as an other, or to otherwise relegate them to a role periphery to the one that dictates the stories told.

First, however, the process of assuming a non-self-identity necessitates acknowledging the existence of oneself and one’s ‘others,’ because only through such

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4 McPhail (2002), p. 16
knowledge may one truly accept the complicity of self and other. Knowing oneself in a collective sense is best achieved through the analysis of cultural artifacts, but particularly texts, for they offer a material trace of a nation’s various histories and various tellings of them. Edward Said is obviously a proponent of this method, as his work *Orientalism* relied exclusively on the compilation of works that elucidated the Occident’s view of the Orient. “Never has there been a nonmaterial form of Orientalism,” he states.

This view about the recognizable evidence of the imprint of discourse has its precedent outside of Said’s field of literary criticism. For example, Said’s work is a thorough demonstration of Bourdieu’s theory of practice, which espouses situating oneself, as an authority, in one’s proper social space, a space influenced by one’s interaction with a particular class, race, gender, language, occupation, religion, political regime, etc., all of which color how ethnographers can relate to those they study. Said’s work is also supported by Antonio Gramsci’s thoughts: “The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. Therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory.” In making a paper trail of the evidence that outlines the construction of the Occidental discourse concerning the Orient, these authors recognize that, more than depicting the condition of the people of the Orient, a compilation of such descriptions describes the condition of the people of the Occident.

Said’s work allows his readers to read a history of the Occident’s self-identification. This fundamental aspect of *Orientalism* serves to instill a new value to the works he analyzes. Rather than being useful and presenting worthy knowledge of their own accord, then, it is the orientalist reading of these texts that is enlightening. This insight addresses the questions I asked in Chapter Three; all of the works that have supplied to us our information about the Berbers remain useful even when the prejudices, predilections, predispositions, and otherwise agenda-motivated perspectives of the authors are brought to light. To reiterate: “texts […] were not accounts of different peoples and societies, but a projection of European fears and desires masquerading as

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6 in Said (1978), p. 25
scientific/‘objective’ knowledges.”7 To deconstruct the content of the authoritative works on a marginalized group, then, is to see the very human fears and desires that motivate their writing.

These human qualities can be so easily masked, though, as they are considered extraneous factors to the reigning goal of naming, defining, and categorizing reality, the objective of reason-driven thought, most often associated with Western thought. Where categorization pertains to human societies, the truly essential components of humanity like fear and desire should not be ignored. Prioritizing definition and categorization seriously limit the capacity for human understanding, for the definitions themselves come to acquire more legitimacy than the humans that they describe. Linguist Dale Spender explains, “Human beings cannot impartially describe the universe, because in order to describe it they must first have a classification system. But, paradoxically, once they have that system, once they have a language, they can see only certain arbitrary things.”8 Yet humans nonetheless develop a commitment to these arbitrary things, attributing to them the dignity of ‘truth’ and ‘reality.’

Classification makes sense of the world by creating for it logical divisions and structure that seem to correspond most closely to the reality understood by those who make the classifications. But a reliance upon this categorical method of thinking easily translates into how humans relate to each other: human relationships, even on a national scale, make more ‘sense’ if humans can be easily categorized. As Spender’s comment explains, this limits humans to seeing only the ‘certain arbitrary things’ about one another that serve to fix categories in place; this way of seeing, because it comes to assume a ‘natural’ place in a functioning society, most certainly explains the tendency towards racism and other destructive, hierarchical relationships. Mark McPhail describes one likely consequence of such a way of seeing: “The term ‘nature’ is […] of critical importance, for it signifies a foundational assumption of essential knowledge, that there exists a reality of things ‘in and of themselves.’ It is the precursor to the justice of essentialist judgment, which defines and categorizes beings in terms of their ‘proper’ and

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‘natural’ places in the social order.” Instead of emphasizing sameness and universality, this rhetoric highlighting difference virtually entails social order based on arbitrary reasons.

With a hierarchy in place, those that find themselves classified at the bottom have two ways to cope with the stigma, as well as with the economic, educational, and political disadvantages which their category has assigned to them. As Fanon stated in Chapter One (see p. 21), one may try and shed one’s arbitrary but negatively valued attributes, as the Berber who refuses to teach their children their Berber language, or else one may try to valorize their attributes deemed inferior by the society at large. This is exemplified through négritude. Either option results in alienation, either from oneself in the first example, or from one’s society in the second example.

But Fanon goes on to say more on this issue, for he hopes in an alternative to these options that lead to alienation:

In order to terminate this neurotic situation, in which I am compelled to choose an unhealthy, conflictual situation, fed on fantasies, hostile, inhuman in short, I have only one solution: to rise above this absurd drama that others have staged round me, to reject the two terms that are equally unacceptable, and, through one human being, to reach out for the universal.10

In this statement, Fanon exposes the inhumanity of the nature of his conflict, as well as expressing his very human fears and desires. Fanon’s lucidity coupled with his honesty makes this statement a succinct proposal for reconciliation between a world that categorizes, and a world that “reaches out for the universal.”

Fanon’s aspirations expressed here recall several of the themes of this project. In aspiring to “rise above this absurd drama,” he acknowledges the destructive nature of his society’s narrative that passes itself off as reality and fact. In rejecting the two terms laid before him, Fanon refuses to partake of the dichotomy his society prescribes, for although it is powerful and pervasive enough to determine one’s livelihood, it is ultimately simply a creation whose specificities are never fixed. His call to “reach out for the universal”

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demands a rejection of classification, which seeks distinction and difference rather than the universal.

One particularly important phrase within Fanon’s statement is that he seeks the universal by way of “one human being.” Fanon maintains the function of this individual; it is this individual, after all, that can undertake the task of reflecting upon his or her contribution to a larger society. Discourses that are disseminated and pervasive in any society are comprised of material expressions; those material products are thus constructed by individuals. Likewise, governments and businesses are run by individuals; educators are individuals; and parents that instill ideologies into their children are individuals. While all of these authoritative individuals are implicit within structures that largely prescribe their behaviors and decisions, it is individuals alone who can take on the introspection that permits a re-evaluation of the system as it stands.

Certain Africanists seeking autonomy and the freedom to self-define in terms different from those of their colonizers speak of “decolonization of the mind.” These authors, such as Kenyan Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, warn that the colonial paradigms are subtly passed along through education and language, which naturally contain the structures of their colonial parents. Although I agree with Thiong’o’s perceptions of these embedded and dangerous paradigms, I also believe that a fight against them is a fight in vain: not only because it will likely result in an inversion of the hierarchies and consequently a displacement of the same marginalization onto a new group, but also because the ‘Western’ and the ‘African’ paradigm, because of their intersection in the past, are now inextricably linked and forever implicated in each other’s existence.

Thus, a decolonization of the African mind is useless without a similar effort on the part of the colonizer. In other words, decolonization of the colonial mind and a subsequent abandoning of ‘colonial’ domination through negative definition are vital to the abolition of the destructive dichotomizing relationships. In the preface to Fanon’s *Les damnés de la Terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961), Sartre recognizes the necessity of this abandonment. He implores of his readers, “We as well, people of Europe, we must decolonize: that is to say that we must withdraw in a bloody operation the colonizer that
is within each of us.” As the creators and perpetuators of the discourses of negative definition, our role in the decolonization process is equally, if not more essential to the ability of the former colonized to pursue their identities in the context of their evolving reality.

This, then, is our responsibility; to voluntarily undergo the procedure of decolonizing ourselves, of drowning the colonized aspects of ourselves, of putting the pen to the paper and rewriting our narratives with a consciousness of who we are, especially as relates to the marginalized about whom we write. We must discern the ‘otherness’ in the other from the universal in them, and be brave enough to do the same within ourselves. We must volunteer to be defined by the marginalized group, to our detriment, in order that we may soon come to prioritize the same values and to reach out in the same direction for the universal.

These recommendations have limited potential to manifest themselves in practical ways, particularly in terms of the Berbers as they confront a future that has largely been created for them, but what I have described is how to more beneficially address the concerns of the Berbers. In terms of what self-identification they have been repressed from realizing, and in terms of what hierarchical structures they are predisposed to pursue to their advantage, the Berbers, like the Arabs before them, have inherited their likely course of action as a result of their contact and complicity with a discourse that prioritizes reason, authority, and the drive to craft a self-identity based upon reason and authority. I cannot regret my inability to make larger recommendations, for in this instance, I only know how to assume responsibility for my own contribution and hope that my humility as an academic is not only the result of my lack of exposure to academia. My contribution is to dismantle the reasons these outcomes are the most likely, to reject them, and to actively seek out alternatives, as Fanon suggests. My contribution is to recognize the mutability of these outcomes, because they are determined by humans and are human constructs rather than ‘truths.’ My contribution, as an authority, is to further my agenda only because I am aware of my agenda, and I thus have a responsibility to allow my

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11 “Nous aussi, gens de l’Europe, on nous decolonise: cela veut dire qu’on extirpe par une operation sanglante le colon qui est en chancun de nous” (in Fanon [1961], p. 31).
readers to witness this awareness. Finally, my contribution is to encourage other authorities to do the same.
CONCLUSION.

So what will become of the Berbers? I have not pretended to offer a response to this question, although it seems to have driven the project to its rightful conclusion: in making my suggestion, I am conscious of contributing to the discussion amongst a growing body of academics who have a stake in the future of the Berbers. I have no claim to such a stake, for my perspective would be too imperial, too rational, and too naïve. As a person living within a system seemingly bounded on all sides by hierarchical structures, I believe in an alternative, but have only imagination and no language to express it; this project is neither the appropriate forum nor media for conveying imagined reality.

The intellectualization of the Berbers who have opted for university training instead of pursuing the traditions of their ancestors is, in my esteem, a bittersweet trade-off, but a necessary and inevitable evolution. In the wake of increased national consciousness of Berber issues in Morocco and Algeria, perhaps these individuals may acquire the skills that enable them to participate in the national discussions about their language and culture. But as we know, this very plight and the language and culture they strive to protect will take on a changed shape if they are at last in the context of a dominant group. Thus, domination, control, and prioritizing of the Berber language ought never to be the goal.

The goal, instead, is already achieved if non-Berber scholars coming out of groups that have the ability to control Berber interests can acknowledge this ability and then to approach the topic with compassion and respect. The goal is also achieved if this educated class of Berbers strive not to inverse the system that has offered them so little privilege, opting instead to embrace their complicity, past, present, and future, with all those others that journey into the region bounded by the Desert and the Sea.
BIBLIOGRAPHY.


Vaugelas (1647). *Remarques de la langue française*.


APPENDIX.

Figure A.

“Distributions of Berbers in Northwest Africa.”
Figure B.

“Question 7: Which languages do you use in the following domains?”

*Table 7: Languages and their Domains of Use*

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<th>MA</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>F</th>
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</table>

SA=Standard Arabic; MA=Modern Arabic; B=Berber; F=French

Ennaji (2005) p. 160