ABSTRACT

DYNAMICS OF CONCEALMENT IN FRENCH/MUSLIM NEO–COLONIAL
ENCOUNTERS:
AN EXPLORATION OF COLONIAL DISCOURSES
IN CONTEMPORARY FRANCE

By Casey Koons

This paper investigates the neo-colonial situation occurring within contemporary France, surrounding the tensions that have emerged concomitantly with increasing numbers of Muslim immigrants in the country. Proposing the application of methods from the history of religions, the thesis traces the concealing function of colonial discourses in French colonial Algeria, suggesting a connection between them and French immigration policy in the 20th century. It further investigates the roles that these discourses play in the formation of the religious identities of the liminal sons and daughters of Muslim immigrants to France with several case studies, including a look at the *hijab* debate in France and the novel *Le Gone du Chaâba* by Azouz Begag. Using these examples, the thesis concludes by exploring the way that colonial dynamics of concealment may be subverted.

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Introduction

Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the world today, particularly within the United States and Europe. This increase is due, in part, to the many Muslim immigrants in the West and their higher birthrate compared to Americans and to Europeans. The heightened presence of Muslims in the West has come at a time when there are also increased conflicts between Western countries and countries bearing a Muslim majority, as well as a perceived threat of terrorism coming from self-identified Muslim radicals. This conflict has led many thinkers in the West to consider Islam to be anti-Western, a revival of the Orientalist notion of "The East" as the opposite of "the West;" namely, the East is perceived as uncivilized, intolerant (freedom-hating), and unscientific. The argumentation in this vein runs from the moronic to the exceedingly nuanced and, although it should be immediately apparent that much of the "Muslim Threat" is constructed, it is not the case that there are not legitimate tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims. This is particularly true with respect to the immigration situation in Western countries, where many different layers of conflict, control, and cooperation exist between populations of immigrants and the mainline non-Muslim population. It is these spaces of cultural contact that concern this thesis, for, within them, fascinating negotiations of identity can be observed in response to the discourse of power and control.

Western countries have reacted to the influx of Muslim immigrants with a variety of responses and polices. To be sure, Muslims have faced racism and discrimination in nearly all cases. France boasts the largest percentage of Muslims in Western Europe, nearly five million Muslims, or 10% of the total population that is frequently recorded in the press.[1] France also has a historical approach to immigration and an attitude towards religion that runs against many of the pluralistic approaches seen in the United States and Great Britain. From within the conflict between the Muslim voice in France and the secular French policies of integration and laïcité (secularity), one can observe the tensions felt throughout the Western world in highly aggravated form.

Indeed, it was in part this tension that caused the riots in Paris in 2005. The violence, which included the torching of cars and attacking of police stations by a disenfranchised segment of French society, not all of whom were Muslims, was inspired by blatant examples of dehumanizing statements on the part of French

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[1] "Background Note: France." in Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (Washington, United States State Department, 2008, accessed 4 March 2008); available from http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3842.htm; Internet. Most researchers agree with this number, placing the number of Muslims in France at between four and five million. Some French census data disputes these numbers, claiming the Muslim population is 3% of the total.

ministers. The riots were largely the work of "third generation" immigrants to France who have known no other world but one without hope of employment or acceptance into larger society. Many of these young men are Muslim children and grandchildren of the immigrants from the *Mahgreb* that came to France seeking a better life in the 1960s. The youth in the *banlieues* (ghetto/housing development) were described by interior minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement as *sauvageons* (wild children), reminiscent of an earlier colonial term for the "other," namely *sauvages* (savages). In 2005 Chevènement's successor Nicholas Sarkozy repeatedly refered to the youth of the *banlieues* as *racailles* [scum] and *voyous* [hoodlums]. These remarks, aggravated by Sarkozy's steadfast refusal to retract them, led to anger that contributed to the rioting in the banlieues. [2] Sarkozy's statements were part of a discourse of colonialism, which is the central topic of this thesis.

Ania Loomba stresses the importance of discourse in colonial studies, which she understands, from Foucault and others, to be: "…a whole field or domain within which language is used in particular ways. This domain is rooted…in human practices, institutions and actions." [3] The colonial enterprise reshaped the world through the deployment of devastating new discourses of power and control. These discourses were manifested in human understandings of "the other," and deployed through colonial institutions like schools. As Loomba notes, it is difficult to speak from outside a discourse.[4] This is because a discourse determines the bounds of what can be known. The colonial situation illustrates a function that the delimiting property of discourse can serve. Historian of religion Charles H. Long describes 'dynamics of concealment' associated with colonial discourses that deny the human legitimacy of colonized individuals and, in so doing facilitate colonial acts of violence. These dynamics are a central focus for this thesis. The methodology developed by Charles Long, Ashis Nandy and others has been readily applied to the religions of the colonized in India and the Americas. Comparatively few studies have applied these theories to cases of European colonialism on a population of Muslims. This thesis is an attempt at a preliminary application of these methods toward the French colonization of Algeria.

I contend that discourses of control and concealment that were developed in the period of the French colonization of Algeria continue to function in the discourses of immigration and integration currently at work in metropolitan France. The first chapter traces this history of colonialism as it was established in colonial Algeria, and lays the methodological foundations for understanding these dynamics of concealment. The second chapter then turns to contemporary France to assess whether or not the conditions faced by Muslim immigrants and their descendents can be considered extensions of this colonial discourse and, by

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[2] Azouz Begag, Ethnicity and Equality: France in the Balance, trans. Alec G. Hargreaves (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), viii.

[3] Ania Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism, 2nd ed., The New Critical Idiom (New York: Routledge, 2005), 38.

[4] Loomba, Colonialism, 38.

extension, whether or not France can be considered a zone of colonial cultural contact.[5] This thesis also poses the question of how these dehumanizing discourses might be overcome by those individuals that find themselves subjected to them. The primary case study for this investigation is the novel *Le Gone du Chaâba* by Azouz Begag. This novel details the childhood and coming of age of the author. Azouz Begag, who would ultimately become not only an accomplished novelist but also a sociologist with the prestigious *CNRS*[6] and deputy minister in the French government, serves as a fascinating case-study for the marginalized *Magrhebi* (North African) population that came of age in the face of discourses of French colonial control. The example of the Muslim schoolgirls in France that wish to wear the *hijab,* or headscarf, in public schools, and the laws that prevent them from doing so, make for a fascinating parallel study alongside the novel. In both the novel and the case of these schoolgirls, we can witness creative negotiations of identity. The lived experience of those who come from colonial contact zones offers a radically new position from which to view and challenge these discourses.

Historians of Religion and post-colonial theorists alike have long seen literary texts as a potent resource for uncovering radical new understandings.[7] Novels like *Le Gone du Chaâba* have a special capacity to unmake dynamics of concealment and reveal to the reader alternate modalities of being human. Through the manipulation of narrative and language, the novel can create a hybrid space that can reveal the hybrid realties of the liminal person in ways that biography or ethnographic research can not so elegantly accomplish. That *Le Gone du Chaâba* has the potential to reveal a great deal about the French and their relationship to dynamics of power and language within a neo-colonial situation is why the novel featured in the third and final chapter of the thesis.

At the widest level, this thesis argues for the applicability of a history of religions methodology on the situation in France, and by extension to other instances where European colonialism came into contact with Muslim populations. The issues raised by these dynamics of concealment are religious in nature, in that they damage and complicate the formation of one's identity, and the responses of colonized individuals demonstrate profound religious creativity. Studies such as these have dual purposes, both to understand the positionality of "the West" in the colonial situation, and to challenge notions such as "the West" with new formulations that come out of colonial contact zones.

Focusing on colonialism as I do, it is worth concluding with some notes concerning my use of terms. I am not fond of the term "post-colonial" in-so-much as the term suggests that colonialism has been utterly superceded. Indeed, it is the

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[5] Mary Lousie Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[6] The Centre national de la rechereche scientifique, France largest governmental research institute.

[7] Loomba, Colonialism, 38. Loomba notes how Foucault, in his analysis of madness, felt that literary text were one of the few places the voices of the insane might be heard.

primary contention of this thesis that colonial modes of understanding the world are still active in discourses surrounding immigrants in contemporary France. Where I use the term I refer instead to the *historical period* that comes after the formal end of colonial practices after World War II. Colonial discourses, I argue, continue into the present day and create what I refer to as *neo-colonial* situations such as the conditions of *Maghrebi* population in France. The value of the experiences of these individuals cannot be underestimated for the scholar of religion. As the following chapter will explore, they constitute acts of creation that can teach us much about the exchanges that take place in colonial contact zones.

Chapter One

In this argument for the applicability of methods from the history of religions to colonial contact between secular French and immigrant Muslims, we start with an exploration of the field from which the methods originate. A question that continues to vex scholars of religious studies is a concise and agreed upon definition for the term 'religion.' It may seem odd that a discipline would have difficulty defining such a primary category, and indeed the difficultly has persuaded many scholars from other fields to dismiss religion as an valid central locus for academic research. Even some historians of religion, including J.Z. Smith, have argued that the search for a definition of religion ought to be abandoned in favor of analyzing religious data.[8] As Catherine Albanese points out, however, the difficulty of locating exactly what religion is demonstrates its central role in the study of the human, for religion seems both within and without human culture. It is both shaped by human action and thought as well as shaping human action and thought.[9] Religion seems at some points to be characterized by the creation and maintenance of boundaries of human experience, while often functioning as the only means for human beings to overcome boundaries.[10] The presence of religion on so many levels of human existence and the ways through which it seems to facilitate the formation and function of human beings make it impossible to deny that religion is a central category for understanding the human. The realization of the importance of the category of religion does not necessarily lead to a satisfying definition, a point that is of key importance in any study of immigrant Muslims in contemporary France, many of whom (including Azouz Begag himself) have claimed to be 'secular.' A brief history of the lineage of the scholarship on which this thesis is based will provide a working definition of religion and justify the applicability of that definition to this research.

The field called 'the history of religions,'[11] of which this thesis is concerned, began with the Orientalist and translator Frederich Max Müller. A scholar of Indian religions and noted Sanskrit translator, Müller's interest in the religions of India were rooted in the search for origins: the origin of religion, the origin of language and the origin of the German culture. In the late 19th century, when Germany could claim neither a colonial empire (like Britain and France), nor a coherent national identity, the discovery of Sanskrit and its relationship to Germanic languages offered scholars like Müller a new venue for expressing the significance of the German people in Europe.[12] India in this period revealed layers

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[8] Jonathan Z. Smith, Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi.

[9] C. L. Albanese, America, Religions, and Religion, 3rd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub., 1999), 6.

[10] Albanese, America, Religions, and Religion, 19.

[11] Originally called Religionwissenschaft, the "science of religion"

[12] Charles H. Long, Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986) 42.

of history thousands of years older than anything scholars had accessed before. It was assumed by many, including Müller, that the civilizations, religions and languages of India represented the origin of human civilization on earth. The theories of Müller and his contemporaries had several pitfalls, not the least of which is the enabling role they played in the establishment of the excessive German nationalism and the construction of a myth of Teutonic origin that bypassed the history of Semitic people.[13] It is worthy to note that Müller's ostensibly worthy academic goal of finding the origin, and therefore an understanding of, religion lead directly to discourses of difference that facilitated violent exploitation against colonized and disenfranchised people. This thesis, therefore, is at risk of perpetrating the very thing it attempts to explore; namely, a discourse that attempts to control a population of people through a denial of their humanness. Hence, it is imperative that we acknowledge the colonial discourses that exist within our own field.

Müller's view of religion was not a positive one. He regarded religion as a disease of language; a viral inefficiency in human expression.[14] Placing German language, as he did, at the end of an evolutionary progression that began with Indo-Aryan languages from India, he committed a fallacy that has not completely been eradicated today in the academy: he interpreted a contemporary population of living human beings on the planet as archaic, or primitive. The discourse of the primitive and the civilized is a colonial discourse that will be explored in greater detail later in this project. By assuming that Indian peoples, who had, in fact, spent as much time on earth developing and going through cultural transfigurations as Western Europe, were the relatively unchanged and certainly underdeveloped precursors to his own language and culture, this social evolutionary model allowed Müller to suggest that the disease of language, namely religion, had steadily been eradicated until language reached a pure form of absolute expression, in the modern German language. This doctrine of cultural superiority would, in part, lead to the atrocities of World War II to which I already alluded and would infuse the descendants of Müller's intellectual work with a fear of and intolerance towards rooting religion in any sort of historical framework.

This ahistorical approach is typified by Müller's intellectual successor, Rudolf Otto. Otto understood religion to be an *a priori* category within human consciousness, experienced through emotions brought about by an encounter with the sacred, or *numen*. In response to the sacred, the human mind was pre–conditioned to experience *mysterium tremendum* or *mysterium fascinosum*, religious awe in both its terrifying and enticing modes. Otto addressed some the problems of his predecessors. Notably, he made evolutionary models of human history and culture impossible, by characterizing religion as a *sui generis* condition of the human mind, and therefore found, in exactly the same form, in all human minds throughout history.[15] However, Otto, perhaps, went too far. Utterly

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[13] Long, *Significations*, 23.

[14] Long, *Significations*, 43.

[15] Long, *Significations*, 24.

divorcing religion from historical context, the early phenomenologists of religion, like Otto, could not account for the variation of religious expressions found in various cultures and time periods. Otto did not bother himself with these manifestations, preferring to analyze the internal mental states associated with certain mystical traditions.[16] While offering a valuable new positionality towards religion that elevated it as a category for research, Otto's methods make it impossible to contextualize the effects of a historical space, such as the era of colonialism, on the religions of people.

The solution to the problems posed by the phenomenological approach would be, in part, provided by the scholar Mircea Eliade. For Otto, the religious response to the sacred was hard-wired into the human mind, and did not depend on history for its origination nor its expression. For Eliade, the human encounter with the sacred, or *hierophany,*[17] caused structures of human consciousness to be created and developed. Archaic people, Eliade argued, had their consciousness shaped through religious encounters with the natural world. In his work, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Eliade argued that it was through structures such as the sky, sun, mountains, and seasons that notions like the ultimate, the everlasting, and the cyclical came to be part of human culture and religious expression. Charles Long paraphrases Eliade's contribution well: "Eliade shows that the originary being and nature of the human is based upon the imagination of matter, of the forms of the world as they are apprehended in human consciousness, not as abstract categories but as concrete modalities of meaning..."[18] This emphasis on the material brought the study of religion back to an appreciation of historical context. Religion seen now not as an abstract quality of the mind, but the transformation of human consciousness through encounters in space and time.

The work of Eliade has been extended by Charles H. Long, who defines religion as being "orientation in the ultimate sense, that is, how one comes to terms with the ultimate significance of one's place in the world."[19] Religion is the means through which the question "What is the world and what is my place in it?" is answered. The workings of this definition are exemplified by the cosmogonic myths catalogued by Eliade, and by Long in his book, *Alpha, the Myths of Creation.* Through the stories of the actions of heroes, Gods, and originary beings, the cosmos is defined. The chaotic reality that confronts a human society is given meaning and order, and within that ordering, a place for the human is defined. The relationships between people and nature, and between people is established in myth and brought into practice through ritual activity. A classic example of this

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[16] Long, Significations, 44.

[17] A term of Elaide's referring to eruptions of the sacred into the profane world.

[18] Long, Significations, 27.

[19] Long, Significations, 7. In adopting this definition of religion, I join several noted historians of religion such as Davìd Carrasco, David Chidester, and Philip Arnold. It is worth noting the importance of ultimacy in the above definition. There are many ways through which humans negotiate their sense of self, religion is here understood to the process at the fundamental basis of these negotiations, not the way identity is formed on all levels of meaning.

ordering is the cross-cultural tendency to associate monstrous creatures and perils with unexplored areas. Even among "modern" people, colonial sailors would label unexplored areas of their charts "Here be Dragons," reflecting the danger these unordered spaces pose to human understanding.

Here the first order of this field's utility to the data is shown. We can see the novel *Le Gone du Chaâba* as a form of myth making. The book reveals a language, and therefore an understanding of the world, that is quite different from that of the Western non-Muslim reader as it explores the childhood of the author. On several levels, the novel addresses the formation of identity, including the very obvious coming-of-age theme that flows throughout. The modes through which identity is defined in the novel both involve religion and constitute religious acts. Likewise the actions of the French schoolgirls are bound up in identification, as the headscarf is on of the most conspicuous visual indicators of Muslim identity. However, these are not the most compelling reasons to approach the data. The neo–colonial space out of which liminal individuals emerge present new problems to the scholar of religion, but offers unique opportunities for levels of understanding that would ordinarily be impossible from within a traditional scholarly discourse.[20] The colonial space is a nexus for multiple world-defining discourses, and while certainly not the first time that cultures come into contact, colonialism was unique for the dehumanizing potential of discourses that informed and enabled it. We will find that these discourses of colonialism radically reshaped the materialities, originally proposed by Eliade, in response to which religious identities are formed.

Eliade understood the pre-modern human consciousness as being formed through the religious imagination of the material. Early people came to their understanding of finitude by confronting the sky, which was unreachably distant, and the mountains of stone that could not be destroyed by human action. Modern humanity, in Eliade's mind, had lost these archaic religious structures; Eliade believed that modernity, here understood as the period beginning with the European Enlightenment and the era of colonialism, had stripped humanity of a religious way of interacting with the world and that we were significantly poorer for the loss. He viewed his scholarship not only as a discursive exercise, or even as a project to better understand the human. He believed that his work could have a

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[20] It certainly true that the academy is not without many scholars from liminal post-colonial situations. Azouz Begag himself is a noted sociologist for the CNRS. When I argue that the "western scholarly discourse" cannot imagine the formulations of hybrid identity without a vector like a novel, I am not merely saying that as a white American, I lack the correct positionality to understand the colonized person. It is the discourse of the academy that can not accommodate these hybrid formations well. Even Azouz Begag, in his scholarly research can not avoid the classifying language, identifying many of the young Maghrebis as "rusters," people would lack a complete cultural identity. To overcome this discourse, something with more narrative power, such as the novel, will be seen to challenge colonial discourses far better than scholarly positions can.

therapeutic effect on Western culture, bringing back the mythic modes of orientation that the modern period had rendered impossible.[21]

However, Long does not agree with Eliade that modernity signaled the end of the religious imagination of matter. Eliade's criticism of the modern was that the material world had lost its meaning making potential. There are very few material structures in the world over which humankind has not claimed some mastery. The sky is no longer unreachable but traversable through airplanes; even the reaches of outer space have been claimed by human flags. Mountains can now be destroyed, rivers diverted and seas bridged. Modernity has even seen the power to utterly destroy itself in the hands of humans through atomic weaponry and environmental destruction. Long shows that modernity, instead, brought about a different set of material structures through which religious orientations are negotiated, which Long refers to as the "new arché" of modernity.[22] Historian of religion Davìd Carrasco defines *arché* as "a more complex formulation deep-rooted and recurrent orders of materials, meanings and symbols which grow to constitute our physical and mental environment and which become the social and cultural *stuff* of what we mold, renew, and struggle to depart from."[23] The locus for these new material structures is the phenomena of colonialism.

That the European colonial expansion was disruptive to many is an obvious understatement. It came to various peoples in different ways. Native Americans experienced attempted genocide, land seizures and forced residential school systems; Africans were torn from their kin, transported like cargo across the Atlantic and pressed into chattel slavery. In India, North Africa and China colonial activity radically restructured indigenous systems of governing and relegated millions of people to a status somewhere just below fully human. It is these dehumanizing discourses that constitute a new *arché*, for the mythic modes of identification and world–definition for the colonized were disrupted in ways with which no prior cultural contact can compare. Many people found themselves suddenly within a cultural and mythic structure that did not acknowledge their existence as meaningful or even fully human.

A colonial discourse that facilitated this dehumanization is the dichotomy between the civilized and the primitive, through which, simply put, European colonizers understood the indigenous peoples of the colonized world to be in some way comparable to European peoples' own ancient ancestors. Such a proposition defies logic, given that the indigenous people encountered by Europeans were alive in the modern period and therefore every bit as modern as the Europeans themselves; that is to say, they had experienced just as much

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[21] Mircea Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), ix.

[22] Charles H. Long, "Indigenous People, Materialities, and Religion: Outline for a New Orientation to Religious Meaning," in Religion and Global Culture: New Terrain in the Study of Religion and the Work of Charles H. Long, ed. Jennifer Reid (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2003), 169.

[23] Davìd Carrasco, "The Open city as the Stuff of Creation in Texaco." Religion and the Imaginations of Matter, special issue of Journal for the Study of Religion, 6 no. 2 (Nov 2003): 18.

history as the Europeans. This discourse not only allowed the colonizers to act without full consideration of their actions as I will explore later, but it suggests that colonized people existed in a Eliadean mode of religious understanding which was disrupted by the more powerful "modern" through colonial encounter.

The discourse of the civilized and the primitive, and other colonial dehumanizing discourses like it, were central to the formation of the concept of "Western Civilization." The period of colonialism was one of ontological crisis for the people of Europe. The boundaries of the World had been expanded, and just as is the case for those who underwent colonialism, when one's world changes, one's position in it becomes uncertain. The formulation of a new European identity was facilitated by colonial contact with indigenous peoples: "The self–conscious realization of the Western European rise to the level of civilization must be seen simultaneously in its relationship to the discovery of a new world which must necessarily be perceived as inhabited by savages and primitives who constitute the lowers rung on the ladder of cultural reality."[24] Dichotomies like civilized/primitive (or the euphemism: developed/underdeveloped) established, in part through the academy, the system of relationships that characterize the modern world, and cannot be entirely avoided.[25] This dilemma is exemplified in this thesis, which despite its aim to critique and suggest alternatives to French colonial discourse, cannot avoid the use of certain terminology appropriate to it, such as the idea of "the West," in our exploration of French colonial discourses. This is the reason why the experience of those people within these neo–colonial situations is so valuable to the researcher, because it represents a subversion of these discourses that we in the academy can not ourselves produce. We will find that these discourses of colonialism still have power over our understanding and can conceal realities of colonialism to us.

A key component of the colonial arché are *dynamics of concealment*[26] that make it difficult to demonstrate that the new arché is also, indeed primarily, the mythic foundation of the "rational West". Ania Loomba shares an example of this when she points out that the Oxford definition of the word "colony" contains a suspicious omission: it explains the colonial exercise with absolutely no reference to the indigenous people affected.[27] Indeed, it was this view of the "New" world,

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[24] Long, Significations, 94.

[25] Charles H. Long, "A postcolonial meaning of religion," in Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous religious traditions and modernity, ed. Jacob K. Olupona (New York: Routledge. 2004), 94.

[26] This thesis engages in an investigation of concealment in a specific sense as developed by Charles Long, referring specifically to the opacity of the colonized discussed by Ashis Nandy, and called "the veil" by W.E.B. DuBois. It is very true that many kinds of concealing and revealing exist on both sides of a colonial encounter, but is key to our understanding that on a certain fundamental level, there the colonizers are completely unable to conceive of the colonized.

[27] Ania Loomba, Colonialism–Postcolonialism, 2d ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 7. The definition quoted reads: "a settlement in a new country...a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of original settlers and their decedents and successors, as long as the connection with the parent state is kept up." No mention of the relationship of the colony to indigenous people of the "new locality" is present.

a landscape that was untamed and unoccupied, that lead to the colonization and later westward expansion of Europeans across the American continent. The discourses that facilitated this expansion did so through concealing fundamental realities from the colonizers.

The usual relationship between the victims of modern colonial violence and the perpetrators can be understood partially again by the concealing intellectual dichotomy of the civilized vs. the primitive. Dehumanization of the natives of the Americas, the slaves from Africa, and eventually the Muslim residents of colonies like Algeria, is a necessary step towards the intellectual and psychological constructions required to justify colonial acts of exploitation. It is what allowed a new nation founded on revolutionary ideals of equality for all men to institute one of the most vicious forms of slavery ever recorded. The move is a simple one: if the victims of colonial activity are not thought to be fully human in the sense that Europeans are, then the Enlightenment rights and Christian morals of equality and the civil treatment of humans could be said to not apply to them. Long calls discourses like the civilized/primitive divide *dynamics of concealment*. They function to conceal the realties of colonialism from the colonizers in order to enable the colonial enterprise.[28] The removal of the moral and intellectual dilemmas that would ordinarily arise given the actions of colonists, while significant, is neither the most fascinating nor the most important facet of these dynamics.

The effects of colonial encounter are impossible for colonized people to conceal from themselves. The presence and actions of the colonizer illustrate a reality with which the pre-existing indigenous mythic structures of orientation are unable to contend. To address this incongruity, those who underwent colonialism needed to form new modes of being human, and such new modes are precisely the interest of this thesis. Many of these new religious movements, such as the Ghost Dance religion in the American west and the cargo cults of the Melanesian islanders, assume and adapt elements of the colonizing culture. This process was frequently referred to by cultural anthropologists as 'syncretism.' Davìd Carrasco argues that syncretism is often used to refer to a process whereby a weaker culture is disrupted by the presence of a dominant culture, and in response, the weaker culture adopts the 'strong' cultural forms of the dominant culture.[29] This academic notion rests on a problematic assumption, however. Given the profound effect the colonial encounter had on the colonized culture, what data is there to suggest that an equivalent reaction should not appear in the colonizing culture? Colonials in India, the Americas, and Algeria, despite possessing technologies and intellectual discourses that granted them more power than the people under their rule, were widely surrounded by non-Western people and alien cultures in the

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[28] Charles H. Long, "Indigenous People, Materialities, and Religion: Outline for a New Orientation to Religious Meaning," in Jennifer I. M. Reid, ed., Religion and Global Culture: New Terrain in the Study of Religion and the Work of Charles H. Long (Lanham, Massachusetts: Lexington Press, 2003), 170-171.

[29] This line of thought, and Carrasco's argument will be thoroughly explored in Chapter 3. See page 47.

colonial spaces where they made their homes which undoubtedly affected they way they lived and viewed the world.

Cultural contact was not a one-way trip; in fact, the early modern academy owes its origins to the incredible academic interest in the cultures, religions and languages of the new worlds outside the boundaries of Europe.[30] Why then, do colonial discourses conceal the possibility of cultural change on the side of the Europeans? Despite being immersed in another culture, and despite being the actor in acts that utterly conflict with their principles of equality and freedom, colonials were able to believe and act as though they were unchanged by colonial contact. That the Indian in India was irrevocably altered by colonialism was indisputable, no one could deny that, but the English perceived themselves as still English. As we will see in the following chapter, these concealments preserve a sense of purity in culture. Colonizing powers, such as the French, can immerse themselves in cultural contact, and indeed share their country with four – five million Muslims without being made to challenge their self-understanding as pure and unchanging.

Of course, Europeans did change as a direct result of colonial encounters, but those changes were largely concealed as internally originating advances in culture and scholarship.[31] These dynamics of concealment exist at all layers of Western discourse, and have been developed and maintained by Western scholarship. As Ashis Nandy argues, "The West has not merely produced modern colonialism, it informs most interpretations of colonialism. It colours even this interpretation of interpretation."[32] It can be argued that Westerns do face a certain cultural crisis; after all, we are not, as Eliade might suggest, crippled because we have lost the ability to religiously imagine archaic material forms. We are, however, cut off from the material structures that have defined human life for 500 years. It is for this reason that Long refers to these hermeneutics as "an essay in self-understanding."[33] Investigations of colonial situations, specifically of the religiously creative meaning-making that takes place within colonial spaces, offer the possibility of a greater understanding construction of the concept of "the West" and the position of non-Muslim scholars like myself in neo-colonial contact situations.

This thesis is primarily concerned with the continuing presence of colonial discourses of control, such as those described above, in contemporary France with respect to Muslim immigrants and their descendants. It will do much to enhance

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[30] Long, "Indigenous People," 170.

[31] Long, "Indigenous People," 176. It can not be disputed that access to never before seen cultures, languages and religions of colonized peoples were directly responsible for the growth of several fields in the academy, including the history of religions. What is conspicuous about common depiction of these intellectual goods as raw materials. There are many examples of concepts from indigenous people that profoundly shaped Enlightenment thought. Charles Long discusses the fetish and how aptly it describes the positionality of the coin–worshipping Portuguese. The Onondaga people of upstate New York have a letter from George Washington cited them, alongside John Locke, as a source for American Democracy.

[32] Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism, Oxford India Paperbacks (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), xii.

[33] Long, Significations, 51.

our discussion of those dynamics in the second chapter to now address how this understanding of colonialism applies to the French colonization of Algeria. Comparisons between the case of Algeria and instances of colonialism already explored using these hermeneutics will demonstrate how the methodology may be applicable, and how it may be challenged by French case in Algeria.

The importance of text and discourse to the French colonization of Algeria is illustrated by the following story. In the first days of the colonial exercise in Algeria, about a week before the Dey would surrender to French military forces in July of 1830, a vital piece of military/colonial equipment was delivered to the beachhead. It arrived alongside a shipment of other vital goods such as grain and munitions. Five laborers who had accompanied the machine worked all day and into the night assembling it. This machine of war was a printing press. On June 30, 1830, the press was inaugurated by the cheers of assembled troops and sailors as it printed the first copies of an Army bulletin announcing the progress of the campaign in Algeria. [34] It is as though, despite the battles they had fought and their presence within the foreign land of Algeria, the efforts of the soldiers was not made real until they were inscribed in text. That the press was assembled in such haste on the beach shows how significant this act was. Koos quotes Jean-Toussaint Merle, who directed the construction of the press, "*cette date signalera peut-être un des événements les plus influents de la civilisation sur la plus belle somme sur la plus florissante de nos colonies.* (This date will perhaps signal one of the most influential events in the civilization on the most beautiful sum of the most flourishing of our colonies.*"*[35] The press seized a kind of power that night, power that the soldiers could never achieve through any force of arms. It was the power to inscribe history, the means to deploy discourses of control.

Although the French colonization of Algeria was marked by significantly more hesitation than the British pursuits in India and other colonial ventures, the French settlers in Algeria nonetheless re–inscribed the history of the country to legitimize the conquest of the territory.[36] Abdelmajid Hammoun, in his analysis of the way in which the mythic Berber heroine Kahina's narrative was transformed by the French, argues that the French historians' "aim was indeed to understand it [the past] better, and create a whole new mythology which would justify and consolidate their colonial enterprise."[37] This mythology depended on laying claim to peoples and landscapes, and proceeded through the re-formulation of mythic narratives like the story of the Kahina. Denis Dominique Cardoane, one of the first Frenchmen to write a 'history of Algeria,' included a chapter on the Kahina story. Significant for Cardoane is the idea that North Africa was the land of Christianity populated by the Greeks and Romans of the Byzantine Empire prior

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[34] Leonard R. Koos, "Colonial Culture as Francophone? The Case of Late Nienteenth-Century Algeria," in Francophone Post-Colonial Cultures: Critical Essays, ed. Kamal Sahli (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003), 18.

[35] Koos, "Colonial Culture," 18.

[36] Peter Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). 10.

[37] Abdelmajid Hannoum, Colonial Histories, Post-Colonial Memories: The Legend of the Kahina, a North African Heroine (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001), 29.

to Umayyad conquest. The Berbers, under the direction of their ruler the Kahina, employed a "scorched earth" tactic against the Arab invaders, destroying wells and farmland as they were ceded to the enemy. Cardoane was not the first to make this observation. His source, the 13th century Arab historian Nuwayri, alluded to this land destruction as well. But rather than the Berber peasants failing to understand the Kahina's plan and joining the Arab army in protest as in Nuwayri's account, in Cardoane's history, it is the native Greek Christians who did not trust the tactic. In this narrative, the Berbers can be blamed for the seizure of rightfully Christian lands by Muslim invaders.[38] The French, the self-professed heirs to the Greeks and Romans due to their imperial and "civilizing" missions, were simply re-claiming land that was theirs and that was lost due to the political failings of a Berber queen named Kahina. In this formulation, it was less the population of the Berbers that was significant, but the land that was historically Christian and the Berbers to be distrusted for their failure to keep it from the Arabs.

A later 19th century French historian would take the same narrative of the Berber queen and recast it to show al-Kahina and the Berbers she represented as themselves justifications of the conquest. For Mercier, and for those historians who would follow him, it was the origin of the Berber people that justified colonial occupation. Ernest Mercier describes the Kahina as a Jewish Berber Queen who ruled with wisdom. Mercier differs from Cardoane in that he describes the Queen quite positively, both honorable and intelligent compared to the Arab conquerors. She is said at one point to have "taught the Arabs kindness" through her treatment of captives.[39] Mercier's account of the Kahina is fascinating because it sharply makes clear the distinction between the settled Jewish community of the Kahina and the Muslim invasions of the Arabs. In the narrative, the Kahina can do no wrong, whereas none of the Arab actors in the story, including those described by Cardoanne as honorable, can escape the opprobrium of being Muslim.[40] In the mind of Mercier, the Berbers shared their geographical origins with the Romans and Greeks, who also settled in North Africa, traveling south from Europe into North Africa. Mercier's history implicitly establishes a European origin for the Berber people and therefore their kinship with the French -- as opposed to the "hated Turk" of the Muslim Arab. It is interesting how this discourse of the other, while it divides on racial lines, uses *religion* as the category of separation. The Berbers were made "closer" to the French through their comparative distance to Islam.

This process of separation was made explicit by those historians who followed in the tradition of Mercier. Henri Fonnel, Mercier's contemporary, had this to say of the Berber people:

> Since 1830 we have been on the wrong path for we have been too
> exclusively occupied with the Arabs, and have mistakenly neglected the real
> indigenous, the Berbers (the Kabyles), an eminently hard-working race, not

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[38] Abdelmajid Hannoum, Colonial Histories, Post-Colonial Memories, 32.

[39] Abdelmajid Hannoum, Colonial Histories, Post-Colonial Memories, 39.

[40] Abdelmajid Hannoum, Colonial Histories, Post-Colonial Memories, 60.

fanatical, attached to the solid with enclosed properties where they live in small houses covered with tiles, practicing, still in a rough state, some industries whose perfection we can encourage. In short, all the rudimentary habits make them closer to us than the habits that constitute Arab life.[41]

A clear discourse of the primitive and the civilized can be seen in the above statement. The Berbers are exalted for their hard-working nature, and the fact that their relationship to property is more similar to the French, compared to Arab customs of co–ownership and a "nomadic" rotation between lands.[42] Still, their skills are "rudimentary" and the French are needed to teach the Berbers how to perfect them. Of central interest to us is that again, the religion of Islam is implicitly the focal point of the comparison. The Berbers are better suited to assimilation because they are *not fanatical*, referring to their manner adherence to Islam. Fonnel, and other historians of the 19th century, felt that the Berbers had less love for Islam since it had been imposed on them by Arab conquerors. This gradation of Islam serves to suggest that the Berbers are more worthy and likely successful converts to French "civilization". Suffice to say, this example reveals the presence of a colonial discourse that arranges the colonized on a hierarchy, judging their proximity to the fully civilized French at least partially on the basis of how fanatical their devotion to Islam is.

The focus on religion in this example is particular to the case of Islam. Colonialism was part of the modernizing movement that attempted to convert the various indigenous peoples that they encountered to some form of Christianity, while at the same time asserting the power of reason and capital over and above religion in Europe.[43] Both these projects were fueled by the discovering of indigenous peoples whose "religion" was difficult for colonial researchers to discern.[44] The cultures of indigenous people were so unlike that which Europeans had seen before, it was possible for Christopher Columbus to state that the islanders that he encounter were without religion in several of his letters.[45] It is for this reason that the focal points of colonial discourses of control for many indigenous groups have not been indigenous religion. This is not to say that religious conversion was not in many cases tantamount to the civilization mission in hundreds of colonial spaces, but instead that the "evidence of colonialism" that will be the subject of the second chapter did not often highlight religion as a marker for a colonized person in the same way that it seems deployed in the French context. Islam challenges this dynamic through the centuries of shared

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[41] Abdelmajid Hannoum, Colonial Histories, Post-Colonial Memories, 37.

[42] Peter Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria, 16.

[43] Long, "Indigenous Peoples." 167.

[44] Many North American indigenous peoples do not have a linguistic split between religion and its opposite. The Onondaga people of New York have long referred to what scholars call "religion" as "doings."

[45] Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other, trans. Richard Howard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 42. Columbus would oscillate between the idea that the islanders were completely without religion, to seeing them as curiously identical to himself, in either case the actual religious or cultural details of these indigenous peoples is concealed to us.

history with European Christianity. Religious conversion had been the goal of both Christians and Muslims throughout the Middle Ages. The North African Muslims have a significantly greater knowledge of the colonists prior to the era of colonialism which informed their resistance to it. Both the narrative of al-Kahina and Henri Fonnel's observation shows that Islam would serve a different purpose in these colonial dynamics then religion has been seen to in other situations investigated with these methods.

At the end of the 19th century the French added a new colonial structure to their array of taxes and land ownership laws. This was free, secular, and compulsory education targeted at the Muslim population. Peter Dunwoodie describes the purpose of these programs: "The objective was thus quite simple, and quite drastic: to lead the Muslim population out of the supposed obscurantism and misery of centuries of Islam into the light of (republican) civilization."[46] So once again, civilization, in the French case, is being set against Islam. By 1892 there were 12,300 Muslim students in 124 of these schools, along with 474 classes within the European schools for the *indigenes.* "Perfection" was the aspiration: "...primary education for the mass of the population, will effectively bridge the gap and, by helping them to live with the same concepts, will teach them to see themselves and to act as members of the same human family, of the same nation."[47] This push for assimilation was coming from metropolitan France and had many detractors among the French Algerians, members and decedents of the colonists that settled Algeria, who argued that the Muslims were irreducibly inferior and could not be lifted up through any process of education. Their opposition would be redoubled when students from these schools would demand the rights to which this "perfection" would seem to entitle them.

Before World War I, the Muslim Algerian response to these schools was largely distrustful. Most Muslim Algerians of means avoided the schools through various loopholes, a practice that the racist colonists were happy to encourage.[48] A large population of Muslim Algerians fought on behalf of the French in the first World War, and after so serving desired French citizenship more strongly than before and saw the schools as a place in which facility with French cultural modes could be obtained, and thus could gain freedom within the colonial situation. Ferhat Abbas, a student from one of these schools, comments on the spirit of this time: "You will understand why my generation and preceding generations continued to call upon republican, liberal France in the face of colonial, tyrannical France. They thought that they merely had to apprise the form of the contradictions which had led to our sufferings for her to put an end to them."[49] This new generation of students confronted the discourse of the civilized and the primitive directly, appealing to spirit of *liberté, égalité, fraternité,* that held such promise in comparison to the colonial realities of racism and marginalization.

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[46] Peter Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria, 19.

[47] Peter Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria, 20.

[48] Peter Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria, 20.

[49] Peter Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria, 21.

Despite the idealistic (and paternalistic) mission of these schools, and the new crop of significantly more motivated Muslim students, assimilation seems to have been prevented. Peter Dunwoodie argues that the school's purpose was not true to its alleged assimilating mission: "The aim, obviously, was to educate, that is to introduce the Muslim pupils into French culture, while retaining a significant number of distinctions in order to constantly reinforce the notion of difference, inferiority, and dependence which assimilation was officially working against."[50] Structures within the schools, such as separate syllabi, inferior living conditions for the Muslim students, and an informal rule that prevented the Muslims students from becoming *surveillants* (supervisors)[51] actively acted *against* the sense of assimilation that the schools supposed offered. The schools served as a means to reinforce a dehumanizing discourse by forever addressing the Muslims as you would a child.

As for the response of students from these schools who called for full assimilation in their own right, Dunwoodie notes that many of the members of the *Young Algerians* called for unqualified and total assimilation with French, which many of them did not see as conflicting with Islam. Fehat Abbas again noted: "I then turned to the Qur'an and I sought for a single verse forbidding a Muslim to integrate himself with a non-Muslim nation. I did not find that either."[52] Fehat and others wanted to be as equal a part of the colonial society as the residents of French descent. Many of them had fought for the French in the First World War and truly empathized with the spirit of the French republic. To allow these men this level of acceptance would have greatly upset the colony, which depended on a social stratification reinforced by discourses of primitivism.

French Algerians were all but unilaterally opposed to this threat to their powerbase[53] which challenged their own authority as the intellectual and political leaders of the colony. The rhetoric used in opposition to these individuals is instructive.

> For my part, I have observed in Algeria that a poorly digested education, qualifications often obtained through exemptions, disturb, irritate, unbalance, and, finally, embitter men so presumptuous that they end up believing that they are far superior to *those whose religion they share...*[54]

This French Algerian response to a generation of French speaking, acculturated Algerian Muslims is striking. The rhetoric of assimilation calls for an elevation of the indigenous population through imbuing them with French concepts of government and culture. It seeks to erase the indigenous culture and, chief among it, Islam. Again we see that Islam serves as a marker for colonialism, it is the grounds on which the colonial authority quoted by Dunwoodie bases his argument that assimilation was unsuccessful.

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[50] Peter Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria, 24.

[51] They were instead always addressed by the informal tutoiement (you).

[52] Peter Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria, 27.

[53] Chief among the Young Algerians demands was to be eligible for local government positions as the French settlers were.

[54] Peter Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria, 28, emphasis added.

The divergence between the publicized mission of the schools to eliminate that which separated the indigenous Muslims from the French settlers and the practice of the schools to *reinforce* that distinction can be seen as an example of colonial dynamics of concealment, and the doctrine of assimilation, as will be elaborated on in the following chapter, a discourse of concealment. In this example, we can see a dehumanizing discourse that facilitates colonial exploitation despite republican values of freedom and egalitarianism. Dynamics of concealment are at work that reinforce that discourse by rendering internally generated critiques of colonialism, such as critiques of the assimilated Muslims like Fehat Abbas, invalid.

The colonial situations with North African Muslims reveal, and perhaps challenge, aspects of the hermeneutic that this thesis proposes. As noted before, contact between North African Muslims and Europeans did not begin with colonialism, nor was there some kind of historical break between European colonial contact and those exchanges that took place before it. In the case of the colonization of the Americans, its possible to see that the profound lack of familiarity between the indigenous people and the European colonists could contribute to forms of concealment. These lands and peoples were "discovered" by explorers, coming into existence in European imagination at the moment of contact. Tzvetan Todorov argues that "discovery" is in fact an act of creation. Dehumanizing discourses describing the exotic "Other" from colonial encounters helped to form the identity of the modern "West," in part, through the concealment of much about the lived reality of indigenous people. Columbus, Todorov's subject, serves an example par excellence, the sheer breadth of the disconnect between his perception of the islanders he encounters and the possible reality of their perspective can strike a modern reader as mad.[55] If these discourses rely on a doctrine of "discovery," how can they be applied to the Arabs and Berbers of North African whose existence was well known to the French colonials? Firstly, there are many ways of constructing a concept of "Otherness." Edward Said's famous work *Orientalism* describes how a conception of the "exotic East" served to bolster Western European notions of self. While the work of Said is quite harmonious with the theories here argued, in that Orientalist views of Muslims certainly contributed to colonial discourses about them, what these two examples show us is that there was a epistemic break in the act of colonialism in a certain sense. 19th century historians like Mercier were engaged in an act of creation with their histories of the Berber people, manipulating the past to construct narratives that would support their presence and actions in the country. The French schools were a system that challenged the shared intellectual history between French and North Africans, and the possible compatibility of French notions of statehood and citizenship with Muslim ones. Hence, though there was not a historical break between the era prior to colonial contact and the onset of colonialism, colonial discourses of power seem to impose such as divide in minds of colonists, allowing spaces and peoples long known to Europeans to be "rediscovered." Both the histories and the schools show how this act of discovery

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[55] Todorov, The Conquest of America, 16.

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was in part an act of concealment. Though it is not possible for this thesis to explore facet of the colonial encounter more thoroughly, I believe this is an example of how French colonial interaction with Algerian Muslims can challenge and refine the post–colonial theories of religion explored in this thesis.

Two key points from these examples of 19th century French colonialism in Algeria will inform our coming discussion of 20th century France. First we have argue that Islam frequently serves as a marker for difference for the French, something here called the evidence-for-colonialism, a trend that we will see carried forward in the contemporary era. This role of Islam complicates the post–colonial situation in fascinating ways, as it highlights the concealing properties of colonial discourses by revealing structures that deny the possibility of historical exchange. Secondarily, this chapter has found the French school in colonial Algeria to be a space in which concealing discourses of control are deployed. The school will continue to be a site for such discourses in the contemporary era, as we will shown through a case study of the schoolgirls in France who wish to wear the Islamic headscarf.

Chapter Two

Having described and provided examples of colonial discourses of control and dynamics of concealment at work in 19th century colonial Algeria, it will now be shown that similar dynamics are active in metropolitan France in the 20th century, so that contemporary France can be shown to be a colonial contact zone. As before, the case studies in this chapter are not meant to be exhaustive, but merely to illustrate the continued importance of Islam and education to these discourses, and provide a background from which a further inquiry might be launched.

France in the late twentieth century constitutes a colonial contact zone due to its colonial activity with North African countries, Algeria in particular, which facilitated a massive series of migration waves in the ending in the 1960s. As immigrant parents began to raise their children within the borders of France, a new generation of people grew in a liminal space betwixt and between two opposing cultural discourses. As in the case of colonial Algeria, discourses of control within French culture challenge the humanness of these individuals, and as before, Islam appears to be the central locus around which dynamics of concealment operate. As in the case with the French schools in Algeria, the post 1962 French school system became a site of colonial contact. Debates surrounding the headscarf in the school system underscore the importance of this space and the problem that Islam poses to French understandings of self and other. This chapter will therefore explore the circumstances of immigration that brought some of these liminal individuals, like Azouz Begag and the Muslim schoolgirls, into conflict with discourses that denied their meaning–making potential.

The issue of immigration and "integration" has been a central point of contention in French politics for the last thirty years. Arguably beginning with the ban on immigration in 1974, the problem of immigration has been an issue for not just the extreme right in French politics, but for politicians throughout the political spectrum.[56] It is interesting to note that while "immigration" has become a euphemism for a problem with the relations between ethnic groups within France, until the late seventies and even beyond, France was known for its loose policies on immigration and its historical tendency to only tacitly follow its own immigration rules.[57] This is because, prior to the OPEC oil crisis which triggered an economic downturn in the early seventies, steady immigration provided economic development in France that would not have been otherwise possible.

Immigration has not traditionally held a place in French perceptions of their history like it has in the US. Despite this fact, studies conducted in the 1980's on the history of immigration in the country (the first of their kind) reveal that France has drawn more immigrants than any other European nation for the last 200

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[56] Alec G. Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Contemporary France (New York: Routledge, 1995), 179.

[57] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 10.

years.[58] Robert Pauly Jr. describes three primary waves of immigration in the twentieth century. The first of these consisted of 329,000 Belgians and Italians between 1876-1910; the second included 576,000 Italians, Poles and Czechs between 1920-1925; and the third included 846,000 Algerians, 270,000 Moroccans and 150,000 Tunisians from 1963 until 1973.[59] In the United States, it is impossible to imagine the historical success of the nation without acknowledging the role that immigration played in it. In France, the historical importance of immigration is no less seminal. Without the first wave of immigration, France would not have advanced as speedily into the industrial age, the second wave replenished the country with unskilled labor workers in the wake of World War I, and the third contributed greatly to the post-World War II economic boom in the country. That French census records and histories frequently omit the historical import of immigration is the result of an attitude toward the language of immigration that will be explored in more detail later in this chapter and can be more easily understood by how they are expressed in policy.

Alec Hargreaves describes how debates between two camps in the post-war French parliament lead to an interesting compromise in immigration policy enacted by an ordinance on November 2nd, 1945. Post-war France faced two obstacles to recovery: first, there was a need for a replenished labor force; and second, there was a desire to augment slow French demographic growth. Compromise between these two priorities left immigration policy surprisingly open. The main result was that residence permits and work permits were to be handled by separate offices. There was a desire for families to settle in France and replenish the population, so a work permit was not required to gain residency status. Likewise, work permits were easier to obtain due to an initial lack of concern over the quality of worker housing. Though hotly debated, concerns that it would impede the inflow of workers prevented the ordinance from including ethnic quotas similar to the ones the United States had in place at that time. There was a desire for European immigrants over those from Asia and Africa, and to promote this preference, French immigration offices aggressively recruited in Italy, while opening no comparable offices in other countries.[60]

Various factors would contravene the desire for European settlers. The first factor was that post-war Europe saw a leveling of standards of living. France could no longer offer Italians, Czechs, and others a radically different set of opportunities than those of their own native countries.[61] Meanwhile, conditions in European colonies declined and policies over the movement of peoples across colonial borders facilitated easy access to France by individuals in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. Algeria had especially open access in the post-war period. Having been under French control for over one hundred years, by 1947 all

[58] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 5

[59] Robert J. Pauly Jr., Islam in Europe: Integration Or Marginalization? (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 36.

[60] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 11.

[61] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 11.

Algerians (including those who were not ethnically French) were considered French nationals by law. These individuals, while still denied cultural significance on many levels as will be discussed below, had legal freedom of movement in and out of "metropolitan France," which lead to a massive migration of Algerian men seeking better opportunities in the French economy.[62]

Despite the presence of some racial tensions in France during this period, French politicians and society did not strongly object to this wave of immigration. There are several reasons for their acceptance, primarily the fact that these immigrant workers would contribute to a profound economic boom in the 1960s. The pattern of the migration also kept the presence of North African laborers comparatively hidden to the French national population at this time. The typical pattern was for an Algerian male to migrate to France and work for six months to a year, after which he would return to his family in Algeria with his earnings and another male family member would take his place. While in France, the men lived in government-sponsored hostels that were ill-suited to family life.[63] In 1946, the percentage of women in the immigrant Algerian population was only 2.3 percent. Economic downturns and a growing intolerance to the presence of North Africans in the country would bring about a drastic change in this system.

In the early 1970s, oil hikes caused by the OPEC oil embargo on the United States and Europe led to a drastic economic slow-down throughout the West. This caused increased resentment on the part of the French towards the North African immigrants who had flooded the country in the wake of the decolonization of Morocco and Tunisia, and the Algerian War. In the drastically reduced labor market, French nationals became concerned about and resentful toward the immigrant workforce that now competed with them for jobs. These tensions led to the ban of immigration in 1974 and the attempt to repatriate hundreds of thousands of North African men. Lionel Stoléru, Minister of State for Immigrant Workers from 1977 to 1981, was in charge of the push to repatriate hundreds of thousands of *Maghrebis* deemed "a surplus to labor requirements."[64] The plan was a failure, however, because it required a radical restructuring of the immigration procedures that had been established in 1947, and the hard liners could not secure enough parliamentary support to change the laws.[65] The ban and the attempt of the government to expel the *Maghrebis* actually encouraged them to actively entrench themselves in France. Fearful that the ban would prevent them from returning if they left, hundreds of thousands of North African men sent for their families to join them in France effectively ending the rotation system of immigration. The 1974 ban did not successfully prevent this; although it was included as part of the suspension on immigration, the French court declared that

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[62] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 10.

[63] Pauly, Islam in Europe, 37.

[64] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 19.

[65] Hargreaves, Immigration and Identity, 19.

preventing families from reuniting was illegal.[66] And so a direct response to the efforts to prevent immigration from North African countries included a sharp increase in the immigrant population and a shift from a migratory population within France to a settled one.

While the French government in the late 1970s and early 1980s struggled to expel the immigrant population that had taken root in the country, the success of the Socialist party in the elections in 1981 brought about a significant shift, particularly in the lives of Beurs, the community of second-generation North African immigrant children that came of age in the 1980's of whom Azouz Begag is a member. The emphasis on repatriation temporarily ceased; in fact, the governmental assistance for voluntary repatriation was suspended.[67] The Socialist government removed many restrictions on Muslim organizations and provided substantial financial backing to new organizations.[68] This was the setting for an explosion in the popularity of Beur literature, the time in which *Le Gone de Chaâba* was published. However, this shift from expulsion to "integration" should not be mistaken for a fundamental adjustment in French attitudes towards immigrants. The preceding section demonstrates how a settled population of immigrants from North Africa came to France, making France a zone for colonial contact. The French polices on this population demonstrate the continuation of dynamics of concealment in this new contact zone.

Recall from chapter one that colonial dynamics of concealment have several effects. When in force, they have devastating effects on the colonized and disenfranchised populations, placing these individuals in a space where their old mythic modes of orientation no longer account for their world. However, the principle effect of these dynamics is to allow the mythic modes of the colonizer to be preserved. It should be shocking to suggest that a population that enslaved a race could go through the process fundamentally unchanged, that the governments responsible for the invasion and occupation of millions of human bodies could contend with their actions and not have their own mythic structures thrown into question. This is exactly the end that dynamics of concealment serve. They conceal the evidence–of–colonialism from the colonizer. It is for this reason that the experience of Begag and others like him is so important to us. I, speaking as within the discourse of the academy, do not have access to the realities of liminal people like Begag, but even more importantly, I cannot fully express the realities of our the colonist's perspective in the colonial situation.

Dynamics of concealment exist on all levels of western discourse. Through concealing the evidence–of–colonialism they circumscribe access to our own identities. What constitutes "evidence–of–colonialism" is often expressed by dichotomies within the discourse of the dominant culture, such as the primitive

[66] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 18.

[67] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 189.

[68] Alec G. Hargreaves, Immigration and Identity in Beur Fiction: Voices from the North African Immigrant Community in France (New York: Berg, 1997), 28.

and the civilized. In the United States, the central dichotomy through which the reality of colonialism is concealed is color. The concept that the United States is, or was, a "white," Enlightenment-derived, Protestant country conceals the violence and contradiction of slavery that is the reality at the foundation of the nation. As Charles Long points out, the image of a black man or woman in the United States is a reminder of the lie at the foundation of the nation. Likewise, the visage of a Native American reveals a violent genocidal origin that seeks to be concealed. Often the targets of concealment are the bodies of the colonized themselves. The battles with segregation in the United States are a clear example of this kind of concealment.[69] Whether legally enforced, as it was in the first half of the century or economically maintained as it is largely still today, the bodies of African American men and women in the United States are hidden in suburban housing projects and inner-city ghettos. Native Americans, first by law and now through extreme poverty are confined to reservations in remote areas of the country.

The *Maghrebis* in France have been similarly concealed by the dominant French culture, largely by the opportunities for housing that have been made available to them throughout their time in the country. The historical attempts by the French government and present political ambition of the far–right *Front National,* to expel *Maghrebis* from the country is a very clear indication that the bodies of these individuals serve as some kind of evidence–of–colonialism. While the primary focal point of these dynamics in the United States is race, this in not the case in France with the *Maghrebis*. Later in this chapter I will discuss how the language of immigration by French policy-makers and academics facilitates the dynamic of concealment by concealing such realities as 'race' through euphemisms like 'integration.'[70] That the French do not view the interactions between these cultures exclusively through racial or ethnic lenses also reveals the French attitude toward citizenship. 'Integration' as it used in the French context can be understood as part of the French understanding of citizenship. Blandine Kriegel, a prominent French political theorist, explains her understanding of citizenship by comparing France to the ancient Greeks. She believes that citizenship is not completely obtained until adulthood, after one has received one's education. To be 'French' requires a shared set of values and a shared understanding of the world that is achieved through schooling.[71] This opinion is widely held in France and is represented in policy by the French Nationality Code (CNF) that grants second generation immigrants, those born in the country to parents from outside the country, automatic citizenship upon reaching the age of adulthood.[72] It is

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[69] Long, Significations, 163.

[70] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 3.

[71] John Richard Bowen, Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 11.

[72] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 24. I do not mean to say that this policy on immigration is a purely colonial construction, indeed, any immigrant child is subject to the same process as Muslim ones. What interests me, is the way these policies are used to colonial and concealing proposes. Hargreaves offers an excellent example of what I refer to: Mustapha Raïth,

interesting to compare this policy to those of other nations such as the United States, where citizenship is conferred at birth to infants born in the territory of the country, or Germany, where having a German father grants citizenship, also at birth. In France, citizenship requires the acquisition of a French upbringing, specifically, a French education. The role of education in colonial dynamics of concealment has already been suggested; however, its continued significance requires further discussion.

The French focus on upbringing as a qualification for citizenship reveals the focal point around which the dynamics of concealment turn in France. Religion, in this case Islam, becomes the primary evidence–of–colonialism that must be concealed. Much more so than the somatic differences such as skin color, evidence of Islam is that which signifies the colonial past. Wihtol de Wenden concurs, showing that the "specificity of Islam in France lies in the fact that it is mainly viewed as the religion of the colonized, of the poor, and of obscuratanism, unable to adapt itself to French values and in contradiction to French political rules."[73] We can understand how this may have come to be the case. While the study of primitive religion served colonial agendas around the world, both the profound disruption of native religions as well as the lack of European familiarity with them shifted the focus of these discourse to a racial one. Islam differs from these in both its comparative resilience to colonialism and the long history of European awareness of it. Our exploration of how dynamics of concealment function in France should focus on the French response to Islam. I will next proceed with an investigation of the various effects of dynamics of concealment on the French immigration situation. One could question why the examples that follow do not merely qualify as examples of racism or discrimination, or what distinguishes them as examples of concealment of a colonial past. Racism and discrimination are themselves concealing acts, and the following analysis will explore how they function to conceal. One of the most obvious concealments, and one that is featured in *Le Gone du Chaâba*, can be seen in the residential housing conditions of Maghrebi immigrants throughout the last thirty years.

In the post-World War II economy there was a severe housing shortage. Much of the unskilled labor market that was had by North African immigrants was focused on re-building residential structures. Despite their heavy involvement in the construction of new homes, preference in ownership was given to the French and European immigrants. The hostel system established in 1953 did not achieve full force until the late 1960s, at which point it was ill-suited to the many workers who had brought their families to France with them, having shifted from a system of rotation to a settled population. [74] With no other options, many immigrants were forced to live in *bidonvilles*, or shantytowns, illegally erected with discarded materials in vacant lots. A *bidonville* called "Le Chaâba" by its inhabitants is the setting for the first half of the novel *Le Gone du Chaâba*, and is

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discussed in the following chapter, though having never spent a day of his life in Algeria was almost deported to Algeria for his crimes in France.

[73] Wihtol de Wenden, "Muslims in France," 64

[74] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 179

discussed in detail in the following chapter. These dwellings were frequently poorly constructed, with little or no insulation, no electricity or running water. An estimated 150,000 people lived in such conditions in the mid 1960's, nearly half of them *Maghrebis*.[75] The French tolerance towards the economic conditions that forced the laborers to live in *bidonvilles* served a concealing function. Located at the borders between town and country, they kept the cities that were being rebuilt largely free of the North African men who were rebuilding them. While families lived in *bidonvilles,* those men still practicing the rotation system of migration used the hostel system. The hostel system was originally overseen by the Société Nationale de Construction de Logements pour les Travailleurs Algériens (SONACOTRAL) [the National Society for the Construction of Housing for Algerian workers.] The hostels were exclusively reserved for Algerian men. Even in 1963, when the organization broadened to include all immigrant workers, the system still effectively separated the Maghrebis from the rest of the population, much like the *bidonvilles* on the fringes had done. Concern for the conditions of the *bidonvilles* and the segregationist hostel system led to a shift in housing policy in 1975.[76]

Legislation in 1975 brought a significant amount of money to the development of new housing solutions.[77] These new Habitations à Loyer Modéré (HLMs) are striking similar to the housing projects in the United States at this time, and the council housing in the United Kingdom. These social housing units were designed with families in mind and had better facilities than the hostels that were known for their bad conditions. The HLMs took the form of high-rise complexes in Zones à Urbaniser en Priorité (ZUPs) in the suburbs around French cities. And despite the fact that these buildings were built in part because of public pressure to end segregation, they would eventually serve a concealing purpose. Originally, in the 1970s, the HLM were primarily inhabited by middle to lower class French families, with those households headed by a foreign national at 15 percent. Programs in the inner cities converted low-income housing to high quality estates, causing many of the immigrants living there to be forced to the HLMs while the French families moved into their newly-renovated inner city accommodations. By the 1990's, more than a third of the residents of the HLM were of North African decent and only slightly over 10% of these owned their apartments, compared with over half the remaining French residents.[78] The *Maghrebi* population was forced, through economic limitations to move to suburban housing projects outside the city, many of which were in poor condition.

Begag's novel illustrates a way in which this exchange may have taken place. In the latter half of the novel, a family moves from *Le Chaâba* to an apartment in the city at the urging of friends who have done the same. They live there for

[75] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 69.

[76] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 70.

[77] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 70. Companies had to contribute 1% of their earnings to the project.

[78] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 71.

almost a year before being abruptly informed that the building will be sold and they may either buy the apartment (which they could not possibly afford), or move out. The landlords, while aggressive, work very hard to locate another apartment for them, in keeping with France's strict laws on housing policy.[79] In the end the family is offered an apartment in an HLM, with better amenities located fifteen minutes away from their current apartment. While the landlord was quite accommodating, it is conspicuous that this shift happens in the novel at the same time it was happening on a larger stage. The most telling aspect of this exchange, however, is at the end of the novel. After Azouz's father accepts the offered apartment the landlord asks him when he will return to his country, in the presence of Azouz, Azouz's mother, and older brother and sister. Bouzid replies: "*Hou là là* [Goodness me!]…*Ci Allah qui dicide ça. Bi titre, j'va bartic l'anni brouchaine, bi titre li mois brochain* [That's for Allah to decide. Maybe I'll go next year, maybe next month.]" [80]It puzzles the reader. Seeing the large family, including the young Azouz watching television, how could the landlord see their being there as so temporary? Is not France Bouzid's country now? As we will see in the case study of the novel in the following chapter, it is precisely the strange territory that the young sons and daughters of Algerian immigrants had to negotiate, facing discourses that, without obvious malevolence, questioned the legitimacy of their parents' place in the French society, and by extension, their own place there.

One of the first measures taken to combat the poor conditions of the *bidonvilles* in 1965 was to increase the standard of living required to qualify for work permits. Essentially, the government forced the shanty-town residents to find better homes entirely through their own means or face losing their jobs and being expelled from the country.[81] While these are not the reasons for the moves made by Azouz's family in *Le Gone du Chaâba*, the timing of the moves is congruent with the actual conditions of this period. In the neighborhood in the city that the Begag's move to from *Le Chaâba*, Azouz is pleased to find that there are a large number of formers friends and other children of North African descent within the neighborhood. Viewed from within this context, the development of HLMs, rather than providing housing to those who could not afford it, seemed to be a reaction to the 1965 law. Many immigrants responded to this law by moving into the city. A population of North Africans previously living just outside the city limits was forced deep into the city to live alongside French nationals. The sudden increased presence of North Africans in those neighborhoods caused discomfort to the native French living there, because the North African bodies served as evidence–of–colonialism. Affordable housing in the city's suburbs, followed by a sharp increase in the quality and cost of inner-city dwellings, would correct this discomfort by forcing the North Africans back out, which happens to Azouz's family in the novel. While the color and race of the *Maghrebis* do not

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[79] Laws which were not abused in the case of the Begags.

[80] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, trans. Alec G. Hargreaves and Naïma Wolf (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 198.

[81] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 179–180.

seem to be the primary categories of concealment for the French situation, it seems possible that the presence of these immigrants had an effect on the metropolitan French population. Though many of the HLMs were in good condition when they were constructed in the 1970s, they have since been kept it relatively poor repair. The high population of *Maghrebis* that live in HLMs today are concealed by the factors that force them to live in fringe areas of the cities.

The shift in attitude from relative tolerance to intolerance towards the *Maghrebis* in the late sixties was the result of the violence and terrorism of the Algerian war, and the sharp economic slowdown brought about by the OPEC oil embargo of 1973. Since that time, unemployment in France has been at unprecedented high levels; in fact, France has led the European community in the number of unemployed residents with more the 10 percent unemployment for the last five years. This is not an evenly distributed problem in the country. While the national average of 10 percent was accurate for most French nationals, unemployment of North Africans in 1999 was nearly one third of the total North African population. In the *banlieues* (a term often used for run-down, predominantly immigrant districts, which are often HLMs) unemployment has been cited at 50% and higher.[82] Begag, in his sociological work, notes that there is high-level discrimination in the work force, joking that one of the qualifications for a job in France is to not have a North African name on your application.[83] Though illegal, this discriminatory practice is not without explicit support. One of the principal goals of Le Pen's *Front National* party, which enjoyed a popularity in elections in the late 1980s, is to enact legislation to guarantee employment for French nationals before North African French can apply.[84] In addition to racist hiring practices, another cause for the disproportionally high number of unemployed *Maghrebis* is that a majority of *Maghrebis* work blue-collar jobs, the demand for which has decreased steadily since 1975. Service–oriented positions have not suffered nearly as greatly, but fewer than half of employed Moroccans and Algerians have white-collar positions.[85] The distribution of jobs also illustrates a discriminatory practice because there are few explanations for why so many *Maghrebis* would be denied work in the service industry. Unlike more recent immigrants, whose knowledge of French culture and grasp of French language may serve as a legitimate barriers in service industries, the majority of *Maghrebis* living in France today are second and third generation children of immigrants. They are educated in the French school system and French is their first, and often only, language. As individuals in service jobs are significantly more visible in society than the blue-collar workers, it would is possible that issues of discrimination in the workforce constitute another form of concealment, again the removal of bodies from the field of view of former colonizers.

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[82] Pauly, Islam in Europe, 39.

[83] Azouz Begag, Ethnicity & Equality: France in the Balance, trans. Alec G. Hargreaves (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

[84] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 197.

[85] Pauly, Islam in Europe, 39

While both housing and employment concerns appear to be more focused on the concealment of bodies, there is evidence to suggest that it may be the evidence of Islam that is a major cause for this discrimination. For example, many Muslim women in France who wear the *hijab*, or head-covering considered by some Muslims to be either a requirement or a devotion to Allah, report that they were denied employment because of their choice to wear the scarf. The employers claim that the scarf would have a negative effect on business due to the impression it would give the customers.[86] Studies conducted in the 1980s showed that many French employers cited their preference for non-Muslim employees because they did not want to give their employees five breaks during the day for them to pray. This rationale also reflects the erroneous belief of many French nationals concerning the religious practice of Muslims in France: among Muslims under 40, the proportion of those who pray five times daily approaches only 10 percent.[87] Both the fear that a covered sales representative would give customers a bad impression and the concern over how ritual practices could affect work performance demonstrate that the colonial discourse which suggests that the cultural position of the *Marghrebis* is incompatible with French society uses evidence of Islam as a means of separation.

Islam appears to threaten the French on a political level as well. Prior to the Socialist victory in 1981, Muslims needed to apply to form organizations with the Minister of the State, an office that would typically ignore such requests.[88] The ascension of the socialists lifted this restriction and loosened public money for such organizations, but ultimately the extent of the government assistance given to Muslims would be a scant proportion of the level of assistance offered to comparable non-Muslim organizations.[89] Freedom of religion, as it is expressed in French law, is quite different from the comparable concept in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Religion is understood to occur within private, pre-defined religious spaces, but it may not interfere with public life. Street preaching, proselytizing of any kind, and most intersections of religion and business practice are not permitted; Scientologists, for example, are not allowed to override the French regulation of book prices and most sell their books at market price, and Christian Scientists are forced to form separate non-religious presses to publish their books.[90] At the same time, the French government takes responsibility for providing religious space. The government will arrange for the land and pay for the construction of churches, synagogues and mosques, as well as privately-run religious schools. While the number of mosques in the country jumped from less than 50 to over 1,000 between the 1970s and 1980s, neither the number nor the quality of the worship spaces match the needs of the Muslim

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[86] Bowen, Headscarves, 167.

[87] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 119.

[88] Hargreaves, Beur Fiction, 28.

[89] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 122.

[90] Bowen, Headscarves, 17.

population.[91] As of 2003, there are only nine mosques in France that can accommodate more than 1,000 at prayer and a large proportion of prayer services occur in private dwellings.[92]

Perhaps even more interesting than the hesitance to devote funds to the construction of mosques is the inequitable treatment in the arena of religious schools. A provision in a 1905 law allows the French government to fund privately run religious schools and does so for many Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant organizations. These schools educate nearly one-fifth of the students in France, and yet the French government has shown no interest in forming this kind of relationship with a Muslim organization, and, consequently, very few Islamic schools exist in the country.[93] Some blame this on the lack of well-structured organizational structures in the French Muslim community for the lack of religious education the majority of second and third generation *Maghrebis* has received. Indeed many of the younger *Maghrebis* questioned in exit polls during the 1988 election identified themselves as "Other," meaning that did not identify as Muslim, and an even larger number cited their status as Muslim but admitted that they did not practice or believe in prayer or fasting during Ramadan.[94] Far from being the principal cause for the failure of Muslim organizations to create Islamic schools, this reality often is a powerful motivator for those parents who value Islam to seek an Islamic education for their children whose attitudes towards Islam can seem ignorant or even secular. In its hesitation to devote public funds to mosques, Muslim organizations and schools, the French government is primarily responsible for concealing the "religion of the colonized" and, indeed, the lack of Islamic schools and the attitude toward Islam in the public education system, the school seems to serve as a key focal point for concealing discourses to target Islam. This point is furthered through the French concern with the *hijab* or headscarf, in public schools.

In 1989, three young girls walked into a rural public school wearing hijab and started a policy debate in the country that would end in 2004 when the French parliament passed a law that was a thinly veiled outlawing of the practice.[95] Many more layers to this debate exist than can be properly explored here, but of particular interest to this investigation is the source of the French anxiety. There is no prohibition against the wearing of headscarves in public places, and although some businesses (including the French government) will not allow their employees to do so, it is widely accepted that a woman's right to wear hijab in French society cannot be threatened. Nonetheless, the veil seems to so profoundly threaten French understandings of self that its presence in public schools must be

[91] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 122

[92] Pauly, Islam in Europe, 40.

[93] Pauly, Islam in Europe, 40.

[94] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 122.

[95] Bowen, Headscarves, 1.

forbidden. A brief look at the symbol of the *hijab*[96] will reveal more about the colonial discourse surrounding Islam, and provide new dimensions to the dynamics of concealment that center around schools and education.

The discourse of the "Muslim threat" that would be associated with the Mahgrebi immigrants in France, and symbolized by the *hijab*, paints Islam as the new enemy of the free world. The fear of some is that radical fundamentalist Islamists from Algeria and elsewhere in the Muslim world will infiltrate the country with the intent of undermining society on a grassroots level, and establishing a state ruled by Islamic law.[97] This discourse is not unique to France; the scholarly work of Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis demonstrates the prevalence of this kind of thought throughout "the West." Despite the seemingly contemporary nature of this discourse against Islam, we have already seen how Islam served as an enemy to western "civilization" in the colonial era.[98] It is reasonable to suggest that the modern concerns with Islam in France derive at least partially from this prior colonial understanding. This constructed threat of Islamist insurgency in France was galvanized by the headscarf affair of 1989. The actions of the three girls from Criel were not largely seen as their own, rather, "behind the young girls in headscarves hides the strategy of the 'Islamists'."[99] The language of this discourse against Islam is not subtle; the presence of the headscarves in the pubic schools was described by one pundit as a potential "Munich of the Republican school."[100] The *hijab*, and the Islamist insurgency that lurked behind it, was characterized as being as anti-democratic and abhorrent as Nazism.

It is warranted to assess whether or not the connection between violence from radical Muslim and the schoolgirls is in some way legitimate. Research demonstrates that the number of French Muslims that are successfully recruited by Islamists is shockingly small.[101] Likewise, the number of France's 4–5 million Muslims that could be classified as "militants" remains in the hundreds. As for the schoolgirls themselves, the connection to external influences seems highly doubtful. The *hijab* was perceived by the French as a threat to society on multiple levels. It represented the backwards and savage patriarchy of Muslim men over their wives and daughters, and an evolution from the Orientalist notion of the sensual Muslim female to the oppressed one.[102] The colonial perspective paints

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[96] Frequently called the voile or foulard in the French context.

[97] Neil MacMaster, "Islamophobia in France and the 'Algerian Problem,'" in The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy, Emran Qureshi and Michael Sells, eds., (New York. NY: Columbia University Press, 2003), 298.

[98] C. W. Ernst, Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 12.

[99] Malcolm D. Brown, "Multiple Meanings of the 'Hijab' in Contemporary France," in Dressed to Impress: Looking the Part, Eillima J.F. Keenan, ed. (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2001), 112.

[100] MacMaster, "Islamophobia," 302.

[101] MacMaster, "Islamophobia," 303.

[102] Brown, "Multiple Meanings," 108.

the picture of an oppressed Muslim girl, who is forced to wear the *hijab* by her father and brothers, and whose liberty and status compared to men are severely circumscribed.

The case of the three girls, Samira Saidani, daughter of Tunisian immigrants, and sisters Leila and Fatima Achaboun, born of parents from Morocco who sparked the *affaire des foulards* in 1989 is well documented, but a primary motivator for the girls is hard to discern.[103] The debate stretched well beyond the scope of the school or the neighborhood of Creil, coming to a head when the king of Morocco intervened in the case of the Achaboun sisters.[104] Nonetheless, the repeated failures of the girls to hold to the agreements that the school had made with them, in close consultation with their parents, suggests the significant possibility of agency on the part of the girls, in opposition to their family's will. In the case of the Lévy sisters, two girls who reignited the *affaire* in 2003, and whose protest fueled support for the 2004 law, the argument that their Islam represented an importation from outside France is doubtful. The Lévy sisters' relationship with Islam was highly self-directed. They had neither input from their parents, their father being a Jewish atheist, nor did they associate with mosques or religious organizations.[105] They oppose the mandatory veiling of women in Muslim countries. It seems highly unlikely, then that the Islam as visibly practiced by these girls was of foreign origin.

The lack of a clear reason for their defiance raises the obvious and interesting question of what the nature and origin of the schoolgirls' Islam may be, a point which will be explored in the following chapter. At this point, it is important to recognize that the threat that the *hijab* posed to the French school system relates back to the special status of education in the formation of French citizenship. The school is the place that young men and women become French by absorbing French values and understanding of the rules of French society and politics. Islam continues to serve as the evidence–of–colonialism, as it did in the French schools in colonial Algeria. The girls pose a threat due to their supposed relationship to militant fanatics or entrapment by a backwards system of gender relations, neither of which appear to be legitimately operative in these cases. What is accomplished by this concern over the *hijab,* and the law which forbids it, is the removal of a very visible signifier of Islam from a public space. This is one of the strongest examples of concealment that we have seen so far, and it is not coincidence that it occurs in a school setting. In no other place does this "evidence" cause more concern than in the French school. The headscarf in the public school is seen as damaging to "integration," the formation of French citizen through education. The discourse of "integration", in whose defense the law of secularity was justified, we shall now see, functions as a dynamic of concealment, where the evidence of Islam, the *hijabi*, must be concealed.

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[103] Bowen, Headscarves, 82.

[104] Bowen, Headscarves, 86.

[105] Bowen, Headscarves, 111.

In this chapter we have discussed the discriminatory practices and realities surrounding housing, employment, and the *hijab* in public schools. We will conclude this exploration of the dynamics of concealment at work in contemporary France with a discussion of the language of immigration used by the French, and the practices of immigration record keeping alluded to at the beginning of this chapter. The French policy of 'integration' is frequently distinguished by French theorists as distinct from problems associated with 'race relations' in the United States and elsewhere. These scholars and policy-makers are quite dedicated to preventing those categories from entering the discussion of the *Maghrebi* population in France. They contend that, in France, "race" is a category that does not adequately reflect the problem, which I contend is at least partially true, as the discourse on immigration for the French seems more rooted in religion. Furthermore, the theorists argue that racial interpretations have a negative effect on a problem like this because they isolate the players in the drama into camps that are insoluble by definition, and that preclude any possibility of integration.[106] While the racial categories used in discussion are constructions that themselves have concealing properties, as they can be used to reify boundaries where no real boundaries exist, to euphemize them does not unmake the dynamics of concealment. Discussing the situation only in terms of 'integration' conceals the actors in the situation and radically shifts the power relations preserved in the situation. Refusing to use racial categories denies the existence of distinct social realties at work in the conflict and reduces those *Maghrebis* perceived as religious to the "un-integrated." Those who fail to integrate are blamed for the failure, and their diverse qualities, most frequently their *religion,* is reduced to a symptom of their stubborn non-compliance. This is reflected in the opinion polls in the 1990s that show that French nationals consider Algerians the "most poorly integrated" group.[107] This practice in the discourse surrounding immigration has facilitated many of the policies previously discussed. The financial inattention and discriminatory practices against Islam fit when the *Maghrebis* appear to be to blame for their own integrative failures.

Another veil can be noted in the habits of French historians in the way immigration is remembered. Recall that the most of the first serious studies on how the country was affected by immigration were not conducted until the 1980s. Even since then, when interest in the North African population has been high, record keepers still make no differentiation in the census between French nationals that are foreign born and those that have *jus soilel* status, and so data on the number of nationalized Maghrebis is largely unavailable. Recall also, the distinction in French naturalization code, where second generation immigrants, like Azouz Begag, would not receive their citizenship until they reached an age of majority and yet in census data they are recorded as having been French from birth. This is a historical concealment that denies the importance of immigration for the historical success of the nation and preserves a notion of an unchanged,

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[106] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 3.

[107] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 119.

pure form of French identity that has persisted throughout the years. Hargreaves wisely notes this dynamic of concealment: "Thus in the official mind of the state, the formal integration of immigrants and their descendants goes hand in hand with their obliteration as a distinct component of French society."[108] Hundreds of thousands of Italians, Czechs, Poles, and now North Africans "become" French in the historical data with no suggestion that any group may have changed or challenged what it means to be "French." In much the same way the French identity was preserved in colonial Algeria, in France a doctrine of assimilation conceals the lived realities of the *Maghrebis* and denies their legitimacy to preserve a sense of purity in French culture and society.

The problem of "immigration" within France makes it a space of colonial contact. Individuals descended from cultures outside France are raised within a discourse of "integration" that functions to conceal the cultural realities of these liminal people. For the *Maghrebis*, the primary evidence of colonialism appears to be Islam, which is concealed through practices involving employment, government support for religious organizations, and above all, the enforcement of secularity in education. We have seen how these dynamics serve to protect the French from the reality of colonialism that threatens the notion of a pure, unchanged French identity. What remains is to investigate the effects of these discourses on the liminal individuals themselves. How Muslim children growing up in France come to an understanding of Islam in the face of polarizing discourses of control will craft potent counter-discourses that reveal much about the religious nature of these colonial contacts. To explore this, we will look at several ways through which the positionality of the liminal people in contact situations such as we have here sketched has been described. We will test these theories, as well as our own, against the case study of *Le Gone du Chaâba* by Azouz Begag, as well as the experiences of the Muslims schoolgirls to complete our proposed application of a hermeneutic of post–colonial religion to interaction between French and Algerian Muslims. At this point we conclude our analysis from the point of view of the colonizer and attempt to relate what dynamics of concealment do to those that are subject to them.

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[108] Hargreaves, Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity, 4.

Chapter Three

The previous chapters introduced and demonstrated the prevalence of colonial discourses of control in post-colonial contexts that continue to deploy dehumanizing dynamics of concealment to protect the colonizing culture by concealing evidence–of–colonialism. In this final chapter, we will explore the response to these discourses. Faced with such dynamics, how does the child of an immigrant come to an understanding of self? The question is compounded by our own position. We have seen the prevalence of these colonial discourses *within* the prominent hermeneutics of colonial theory and history of religions. How does this thesis propose to overcome discourses foundational to the academic discipline on which it is based? In the first place, I have already failed, relying on the constructions of "the West" and the "immigrant" as fixed positions. This dichotomy suited our exploration of French colonial and neo–colonial discourses and practices, which themselves rely on an understanding of the players in this game, secular/Christian France and Muslim Algeria, to be mutually exclusive, static, and territorially bound cultural entities. To continue with these objects in this state would do little but to support the colonial discourses that we seek to problematize. The writings of Charles Long and Ashis Nandy both stress the element of opacity in the colonial situation. The discourse that we have investigated contains dynamics that conceal the human significance of the colonized, which serves to facilitate the often violent exploitations that characterize colonial practice. This denial also leads to a blindness on the part of the colonizer to the mythic responses of the colonized. Ashis Nandy describes this dynamic:

> Between the modern master and the non-modern slave, one must choose the slave not because one should chose voluntary poverty or admit the superiority of suffering, not only because the slave is oppressed, not even because he works (which, Marx said, made him less alienated than the master). One must choose the slave also because he represents a higher-order cognition which perforce includes the master as a human, whereas the master's cognition has to exclude the slave except as a 'thing'. Ultimately, modern oppression, as opposed to the traditional oppression, is not an encounter between the self and the enemy, the rulers and the ruled, or the gods and the demons. It is a battle between the dehumanized self and the objectified enemy, the technologized bureaucrat and his reified victim, pseudo-rulers and their fearsome other selves projected on to their 'subjects'.[109]

Nandy suggests that the colonial encounter, for the colonizers, is less an encounter with another human cultural group and more an encounter with a constructed "other" that is a reflection of the colonizer's own understanding of himself. We have certainly already seen how, in the case of the *hijab* debate in France, dynamics of concealment parallel discourses of an extremist Muslim threat

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[109] Nandy, Intimate Enemy, xvi.

that is not at all related to the lived experience of the headscarf–wearing schoolgirls. The process that led to the construction of a Muslim "Other" has been thoroughly explored, first by Edward Said in *Orientalism* and more recently in the contributions of Emran Queshi and Michael A. Sells' edited volume: *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy.* The solution to this blindness is the experience and work of individuals, like Azouz Begag. The descendents of immigrants raised in France have a perspective of great clarity. As Nandy points out, the slave[110] *must* be aware of the master as human in order to survive the colonial situation. Charles Long cites this awareness as the source of the "double consciousness" described by W.E.B. Dubois.[111] Hence, the religious responses to the Muslim immigrant situation experienced by those like the schoolgirls and Azouz Begag constitute potent critiques of these colonial discourses. To begin to develop how we might understand Azouz Begag as an individual, or his novel *Le Gone du Chaâba* as evidence of a critique of colonial discourses of control, we must explore some of the methods that have been employed to describe what may be occurring in contact zones such as France and liminal groups like the *Beurs.*

The exchanges that take place between cultures in colonial contact have been understood by scholars in numerous disciplines through the concept of syncretism. The critique to follow comes from a tradition of distaste for this term in the history of religions, well catalogued by Davìd Carrasco. Carrasco begins by quoting the *Harper–Collins Diction of Religion,* which describes syncretism as "a term of dubious heritage and limited usefulness often employed to ascribe insincerity, confusion, or other negative qualities to a nascent religious group"[112] He argues that syncretism is a useless category because *any* religion can be referred to as syncretistic, and yet, the term is most often applied to religions and religious responses of colonized people, which becomes a way to stratify the religions of the oppressed as confused and therefore weaker. As it is commonly understood, syncretism can be shown to reinforce fallacies within colonial discourses that we have already explored. In fact, the problems inherent in the syncretistic model are examples of Ashis Nandy's argument that colonialism informs even the interpretation of itself. As we recall, the colonial process devastates the mythic structures of the colonized, such that pre-existing mythic structures no longer function to define the world or one's place in it. A syncretistic interpretation of this scenario understands the colonial culture to be more powerful for the colonized than the colonized' pre-existing culture, and in the confluence of cultures, the more powerful player gains supremacy and effectively destroys its lesser. The altered identities of colonized, or neo–colonial individuals, in so far as they resemble the dominant culture, are evidence that the individual has, in a

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[110] Here read to be synonymous with the marginalized people. The connection being that the African slave, colonized Indian or Algerian and French-born descendent of North African immigrants are all subject to variations of the same discourse of power that denies their human legitimacy.

[111] Long, Significations, 120.

[112] Davìd Carrasco, "Jaguar Christians in the zone," in Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity, ed. Jacob K. Olupona (New York: Routledge, 2004), 133.

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sense, "converted" to the superior culture. In our case, the Maghrebis become French in response to the failure of their previous mythic framework. A corollary of this understanding informs the French discourse on integration, which we have already explored, which blames the *Maghrebis* themselves for their failure to assimilate; an assimilation that calls for the complete abandonment of distinct cultural forms including religion. The term syncretism relies on many of the same presuppositions of colonialism, which we here do not wish to leave unquestioned. Understanding the exchanges that occur between cultures as syncretistic preserves a sense of the superiority, and resultant immutability, of the colonizing culture. Not only does this construction value Western civilization above that of the indigenous peoples with whom Europeans come into contact, but it suggests that the two cultures are mutually exclusive, seriously eliminating the possibility of exchange between the two cultures. The only identity that is acceptable for the liminal person, then, is at best a "weaker" or "incomplete" version of the dominant cultural identity and at worst no real identity at all.[113] While these discussion of syncretism is brief, it should suffice to highlight the key presuppositions that undermine syncretistic interpretations.

Azouz Begag, in addition to being an accomplished author of more than 20 works for adults and children, has worked for the prestigious *CNRS*[114] for over 20 years as a sociologist; he was married to a French woman and is the father of two French children; he also served as the delegate minister for equal opportunities in the French Government under Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin. He has overtly defined himself as non-religious.[115] During his tenure as an deputy minister, he elicited criticism for not addressing the issues in the *banulines,* despite his very public criticism of Nicolas Sarkozy's remarks during the 2005 riots.[116] It seems that it could be argued that Azouz is an example of successful assimilation; that he rejected those Algerian cultural norms that prevented him from succeeding in French society and adopted the identity of a Frenchman. Indeed, a certain reading of *Le Gone du Chaâba* can seem to support this. In the conflict between success and loyalty towards the Algerian heritage of his home, something that will be analyzed in great detail later in this chapter, Azouz several times chooses the French to the detriment of his Algerian identity. When his success in school leads the other Arab kids in his class to accuse him of not being an Arab, he is paralyzed: "'Everything he said seemed obvious. I felt ashamed. I was scared. I could not answer back because I thought they were right.'"[117] Syncretism, therefore, will need to be addressed in our discussion of *Le Gone du Chaâba* along with two other interpretive categories.

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[113] Carrasco, "Janguar Chrsitians," 133.

[114] The Centre national de la recherche scientifique, France largest governmental research institute.

[115] Alec G. Hargreaves, Immigration and Identity in Beur Fiction: Voices from the North African Immigrant Community in France, (New York: Berg, 1997), 27

[116] Azouz Begag, Ethnicity and Equality: France in the Balance, trans. Alec G. Hargreaves (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), ix.

[117] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, trans. Naïma Wolf and Alec G. Hargreaves as The Shantytown Kid (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 76.

Another method of describing the plight of the *Beurs* and immigrants who find themselves caught between the two cultures of France and Algeria is the metaphor of trying to sit "with one's ass between two chairs." Mireille Rosello offers an excellent description of this interpretation using the image on the cover of Gérard Fuchs's *Ils resteront: Le Défi de l'immigration* (They Will Stay: The Challenge of Immigration). The image is a cartoon by Plantu that depicts a man with a suitcase performing a full split with his feet resting on opposite chairs. The man is obviously of *Maghrebi* descent, mustached with dark frizzy hair, and the backs of the chairs are carved to look like the nation of France and the continent of Africa.[118] This understanding defines the *Maghrebis*, again, as trapped between cultural forces, the French and the Algerian. Unlike syncretism, there is no apparent privileging of either cultural force. The *maghrebis* are equally distant from both cultural systems: they are denied access to Algerian identity by virtue of their lack of physical connection to the place and complete adoption of French identity is prevented by racism and many of the discourses of colonialism that we have already explored. This leaves individuals, like Azouz Begag, permanently in a 'place between.' Alec G. Hargreaves, noted scholar of the *Beurs* and friend to Azouz Begag, represents this an facet of this viewpoint in his book, *Immigration and Identity in Beur Fiction.* "The cohabitation within the Beurs of conflicting aspirations derived from their bi-cultural condition makes the construction of a coherent sense of personal identity a highly problematic one."[119] Cultures, which Hargreaves defines as a set of shared habits that "serve as a bridge between past experience and future projections,"[120] are not fully available to the *Beurs* in either the Algeria of their home or the France outside it. "While each culture serves as a bridge of continuity to those within it, others who, like the Beurs, cross from one culture to another often face chasms of alarming proportions."[121] Hargreaves' construction, while not privileging either culture, maintains a sense of distance between them that, like the mutually exclusive position of syncretism, implies that opportunities for exchange between them are limited. The space between is hardly a space at all, characterized by chasms and traps. The construction of a stable or coherent identity is so difficult that it is seemingly impossible. The emptiness of this position is best illustrated by Hargreave's description of Mustapha Raïth, a *Beur* author who married a French woman, than later raped another French woman, and while in prison discovered Islam, as an extreme example of a *Beur* prototype*:*

> The wild fluctuations in Raïth's behavior and attitudes are particularly extreme, but the conflicting impulses which underlie his instability are

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[118] Mireille Rosello, "The 'Beur Nation': Toward a Theory of 'Departenence,'" Research in African Literatures 24, no. 3, (1993): 15. It's important to note that the image by Plantu is of and immigrant, like Azouz's father Bouzid. It is not so readily suggested that liminal individuals like Azouz Begag straddle these chairs in this way, though one can justly ask where the Beur is expected to sit between the chairs.

[119] Hargreaves, Beur Fiction, 21.

[120] Hargreaves, Beur Fiction, 16.

[121] Hargreaves, Beur Fiction, 16.

shared in varying degrees by many among the Beur generation. In these circumstances, no single deed or display of emotion, no matter how dramatic or apparently binding, can be regarded as a definitive indicator of personal identity.[122]

It is not my suggestion that *Beurs* and other immigrants do not face serious obstacles in the construction of their identities. The sheer scope of the dehumanizing discourses that we have explored is astounding, and their destructive effects have been well documented. Hargreaves' understanding of this process of identity creation is troublesome, due in large part to how it necessarily limits the possibility of success for the *Maghrebis*. It is almost as if the obstacles to self-orientation are never fully overcome, that the empty space between the cultures *is* their only identity. No matter where the *Beur* individual may be, at home within an Algerian space or outside in a French one, he or she is being dishonest to him or herself or to those around him or her in some way: "[The cultures of Algeria and France] can be reconciled only by the invention of new solutions and compromises. At an everyday level, these may involve *white lies* or other forms of play-acting" (emphasis mine).[123] I do not think that Hargreaves would dispute the kinds of formations that I will soon argue take place, or suggest that *no meaning* is possible in the space between. What I find unsatisfying about Hargreaves approach is the treatment of silent spaces, such as the space between French and Algerian culture, as areas of *limited* creative possibility and I am uncomfortable with the analogy of lying that he presents. Even if only on some level, the idea identities expressed by liminal individuals involves lying or play–acting can easily support a stratified view of religious posititionalities. While this understanding expressed by Hargreaves and many others concerning the *Beurs* is extremely sympathetic and opposes the presupposition that these individuals are by nature weaker or poorer culturally than the French, it nonetheless can suggest a negative valuation in the end. Hargreaves is one of the most prominent scholars of Azouz Begag's work and *Beur* literature, and many besides him employ theoretics similar to those described above to investigate the situation of the *Maghrebis* and the novel *Le Gone du Chaâba*.

Next, we employ theories developed by noted scholars of post–colonial theory and religion and colonialism to develop a method that will preserve suppositions ignored or slighted by the prior two. Specifically, we have taken issue with the either implied or resultant analysis of the *Maghrebis* as culturally inferior to the French and the characterization of cultures as fixed and mutually exclusive entities between which very limited exchanges are possible. Recall from the first chapter, that I take the formation of identity to be a fundamentally religious process. Understanding the world and one's significance within it in an ultimate sense is religious work. Mircea Eliade explained this process of identity-formation through explorations of archaic human encounters with the material natural world. Confronting material structures such as the sky, mountains of

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[122] Hargreaves, Beur Fiction, 22.

[123] Hargreaves, Beur Fiction, 26.

stone, and the renewing cycle of plant life opened new doors of consciousness within the mind of the archaic mind, giving her a sense of ultimacy, permanence and cyclical time against which the finite lives of humans are situated. Charles Long extends Eliade's understanding into the modern period suggesting that the era of colonialism brought a new arché within which new material structures facilitate the construction of human consciousness. The colonial exercise devastated the mythic structures of colonized people, by imbedding them within a discourse that denied their full humanity and significance in the world. This is a religious crisis, and religious creativity was manifested in response to it. The descendants of Algerian immigrants find themselves between two cultural discourses that claim mutual exclusivity. The Algeria of their parents or grandparents is a myth of origin, one to which they cannot relate as their forefathers did, but that cannot help but affect ramifications in their own lives.[124] The French culture in which they grew up, in certain physical and linguistic senses the *only* culture to which they have had access, denies their legitimacy. This seemingly hostile space between, where cultures come into contact, is in fact an incredibly pregnant space for the creation of human meaning. Homi K. Bhabha describes the production of meaning in colonial contact zones as mediated through a Third Space.

> The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is an ambivalence in the act of interpretation.[125]

Focusing on the colonial situation, we can see the ambiguity of this interstitial space as very promising for our subject matter.[126] As the discourses of colonial control enter into this space they can be recast and critiqued in ways that they would seem themselves to preclude: "It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciations that ensure that the meaning and symbols have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew."[127] The identities that emerge are not limited due to their passage

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[124] Samia Mehrez, "Azouz Begag: Un di zafas di bidoufile or The Beur Writer: A Question of Territory." Yale French Studies 1, no. 82 (1993): 28.

[125] Homi K. Bhabha, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences," in The Post-Colonial Studies Reader 2nd ed., ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 156.

[126] It is worth noting here how this notion of hybridity that I argue for escapes my criticism of syncretism. Certainly, all religions could be called hybrid, and the hybrid model does continue to employ reifed images of the cultures that come into contact. Bhabha calls for an attention to focus and an active acknowledgment that while we focus on the colonial situation there both the French culture and Alegerian culture represent themselves potent hybridities. Like Long, Bhabha calls for a self-reflexisive perspective.

[127] Bhabha, "Cultural Diversity," 157.

through this third space, nor are they subordinate to the prior cultures that came into contact; rather they are fully whole and unique *hybrid* formations. Bhabha stresses that this is the condition of all cultures and that therefore no culture can claim the purity previously evidenced in French census policy, for example.[128] This viewpoint allows us to see the responses of colonized or neo-colonized individuals as complete and robust systems of understanding and potent critiques of the colonial discourses of control that were part of their formation. The Third Space between cultures in contact is, as Bhabha states, unreachable in itself, however we can investigate the elements that come into contact in these zones. The colonizers brought with them, as we have already discussed, potent meaning– denying discourses.[129] While Bhabha is quite adamant that the power of these spaces is the capacity for subversion latent in the act of exchange and duplication, Hargreaves also makes a worthy point: the "space between" for *maghrebis* is characterized by potent silences, spaces where expression is denied. Exactly how does one come to define oneself within a silent space? Charles Long discusses the power and radical irony of silence in his seminal work *Significations*.

> The fact that silence presupposes words is what gives it this ironic twist. Without words there can be no silence, yet the sheer absence of words is not silence. Silence forces us to realize that words, the units of our naming and recognition in the world, presuppose reality which is prior to our naming and doing.[130]

Silence, the absence of words thrust upon colonized people, is itself a complex of infinite potential. Within a silent space, the naming structures of significance imposed by discourses of power lose their ontological power. The silent space itself, pregnant with meaning, expresses human significance on a pre-literal level that overrides and undercuts naming structures. Long's conception of the power of silence can help us to understand Bhabha's Third Space, and what it is that facilitates the high flexibility of discourses in contact. Understanding the response of colonized individuals as hybrid formations allows them to retain their significance. Furthermore, these dynamics of the Third Space reinforce Nandy's understanding of the interplay between those in power and those denied power in the colonial enterprise. When the colonizer witnesses the hybrid, the reality of the colonized person's critique is opaque. She will see mimicry or assimilation. While I favor this understanding as it demonstrates the flexibility of cultures in contact, and the legitimacy of human responses to colonialism, all three of the positions here sketched have resonances in the novel and will be explored there. After all, if what I argue is correct, I, the researcher, am denied access to the fundamental realities understood and lived by liminal individuals. We must try to let them speak for themselves.

The creative capacity for these liminal spaces is impressive, but this is not to suggest that nothing is lost. Hargreaves is quite right when he suggests that

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[128] Bhahab, "Cultural Diversity," 157.

[129] Discourses which paradoxically facilitate fascinating new meanings.

[130] Long, Significations, 67.

cultural modes are compromised by the colonial situation. Both Homi Bhabha and Davìd Carrasco admit that a property of these exchanges is the corruption or loss of prior modes of expression: "…this third creation is filled with ambivalence, the ambivalence of writing the new language but also destroying the full integrity of oral modes of expression."[131] The creation of a hybrid language, discussed below, necessarily requires that an existing language be compromised. Still, we can not allow this corruption to be the focus of our investigations, or see them as refuting the significance of the hybrid identity.

The value of the novel in post-colonial studies cannot be over stated, and there are countless examples of parallel studies. Much of Bhahba's own work centers around the exchanges between English and hybrid colonial literature in India. Of particular interest to us is the treatment of Patrick Chamoiseau by historian of religion Davìd Carrasco. In his article, Carrasco contends that the novel itself constitutes a post-colonial moment of meaning making. Carrasco argues that the novel *Texaco*, a "swinging, dancing text" which follows two generations of life on Martinique, is itself an act of orientation and myth making.[132] He explores the "creation stuffs" at work in the novel stemming from three *archés*: the *arché* of cosmic nature, the *arché* of colonialism, and the *arché* of the city. By "creation stuffs," he refers to the material structures out of which meaning and identity for the characters in the novel are forged. This thesis has been largely theoretical, discussing the operations of discourses as they move through systems of thought. We must not forget, though, that these discourses of power have material expressions. The *bidonvilles* of the early immigrants, the schools of colonial Algerian, and today, and the headscarf worn by a Muslim woman are the material structures, the *stuffs*, at which colonial discourses are directed and from which a multitude religiously creative new hybrid identities are formed. Among the *stuffs* that Carrasco finds in the novel, creole language stands out as most significant to our project:

> The primordial force of language and therefore its *arché*...determines what one thinks, how one's mind works, what spaces in human thought are opened as an internal geography for reflection. One "must think Creole before he even thinks"... [133]

Books like *Texaco* and *Le Gone du Chaâba* are not merely significant for the stories that they tell but also for the language with which they tell them. The realities expressed in the novel are hybrid realities and the language is necessarily a hybrid formation as well. This point may be illustrated by the title of *Le Gone du Chaâba* itself. *Gone* is French slang, literally referring to an youth, but in Lyon in the 1980s, it was commonly used to denote "boy." *Chaâba* is the name of the *bidonville* that serves as the setting for the first half of the novel. The original novel includes two "Petits dictionnaires", one for Bouzidian[134] Arabic words and

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[131] Carrasco, "Open City," 25.

[132] Carrasco, "Open city," 18.

[133] Carrasco, "Open city," 25.

[134] Bouzid is Azouz's father.

immigrant pronunciation of French, and another for the colloquial French of Lyon called Azouzian words.[135] Samia Mehrez keenly observes that these word lists are dictionaries, not glossaries. They do not inform the reader of a specialized vocabulary unique to the book but "rather, they have been imposed on the official language and the authoritative discourse, which had so far treated them as though they were 'special.'"[136] Mehrez goes on to elaborate how this novel, as well as the language in it, represents a statement of unique identity and culture and challenges the prevalent discourse that would deny that possibility. Mehrez's analysis runs counter to the French literary establishment, which, she argues, marginalizes *Beur* authors and their works.

Le Gone du Chaâba is frequently characterized as "Beur fiction." Michel Laronde demonstrates how this literary classification has a concealing purpose. The corpus of works from the explosion of literature in the *Beur* community in the 1980's and a comparable boom among other African immigrants in the early 1990's represents a significant portion of post-colonial literature coming out of France. Francophone literary studies have not described the books in this way, however. Most often, the work is either classified as part of the corpus of "French literature" or given a classification like "Beur fiction."[137] In the first instance, it becomes assimilated into the supremacy of "French" literature. It is reduced to near silence as a postcolonial literary discourse from within French culture, and the assimilatory supremacy of 'French' literature is preserved. If the "Beur" label is accepted, institutional discourses (those of the media and the publishing world) reduce it to a minor literature.[138] In the study of the novels a similar process to the one seen in the census data is taking place. The postcolonial nature of these novels which highlight a distinct cultural reality from within France is being concealed through an integration of the works into the larger corpus of French literature, while the works are simultaneously being utilized to preserve a myth about a purity of French culture as expressed through its literary tradition. If the novels avoid such a treatment, they are relegated to the margins and classified as "fiction" that does not speak to reality as "literature" does. Mirelle Rosello comments on the danger of this confusion:

> Nevertheless, if we consult fictional texts that occupy an ambiguous space between memoir and novel, between autobiography and allegory, we run the danger of confusing "fiction" with "reality" and of once again mistaking the shadow of a thing for the thing itself: the "authenticity" of fiction will be called into question, and the readers of such texts will be dismissed as "intellectuals" who are guilty of usurping the word of others.[139]

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[135] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, (Paris, Seuil: 1986), 241-242.

[136] Mehrez, "The Beur Writer," 39.

[137] Michel Laronde, "Displaced Discourse: Post(-)coloniality, Francophone Space(s), and the Literarture(s) of Immigration in France," in Postcolonial Theory and Francophone Literary Studies, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005), 173.

[138] Laronde, "Displaced Discourse," 174.

[139] Rosello, "Toward a Theory of 'Departenence,'" 17-18.

Our treatment of the novel should therefore be cautious in the ways in which it categorizes this text as "unique," lest we also marginalize the import of the text. Here we recognize peculiar properties of the novel, and why the novel is such a valuable piece of evidence. Fiction, through its manipulation of language, can side-step or re-imagine concealing discourses, by inventing a hybrid language that expresses the hybrid realities of the world for both the victims of colonialism and the so-called victors. The danger of being assimilated into French literature is at the same time the possibility of the text entering into and altering those discourses. Quoting Samia Mehrez again: "Hence, *Le Gone* not only imposes the language of the minority on the dominant culture, but it also shows the transformation of the dominant as it interacts with the minority culture."[140]

The theoretical gymnastics explored to this point were a attempt to ensure that our reading of the case study of *Le Gone du Chaâba* is not a closed one. Colonial discourses of power function on many levels of academic discourse and are particularly present in the understanding of colonialism itself. From within the academic, and therefore unavoidably colonial, discourse, we cannot ourselves provide a critique of the discourse of colonialism and indeed are troubled to even represent those that we find as stable fully operative positions from which to speak. Davìd Carrasco paraphrases Long in urging: "We must seek, twist and renew ourselves into the s(lashes) of history because that is where the colonized developed their epistemologies."[141] The work of Azouz Begag will be shown to come from such a "slash" in history and we shall find that the author invites his readers to find, themselves, within his work.

Le Gone du Chaâba can be divided into two parts, and each half of the book is dominated by two settings: school and home. In the first half of the novel, the home setting is *Le Chaâba*, a *bidonville* surrounding a single concrete house in a patch of land near the bank of the river Rhône. The school setting during the first half is the *École Léo-Lagrange*, a primary school and Azouz's teacher there is Monsieur Grand. In the second half of the novel, the Begags move from Le Chaâba to an apartment in Place Sathonay, and Azouz finishes CM2 at *École Sergent–Blanda* with teacher Madame Valard and then starts *lycée* at *St. Epapécy*. Monsieur Emile Loubon. These two settings house two disparate cultural discourses between which Azouz is forced to negotiate. At home, he speaks Arabic and his parents identify home as El-Ourcia [Algeria], while at school he speaks French and is frequently willing to claim a French identity in order to succeed. The caustic dichotomy of cultures described by Hargreaves is well represented by this struggle, as are the many dynamics of concealment at work in France in the 1960s on the immigrant population.

The first half of the novel has a child-like quality, particularly in the beginning. The reader explores the *bidonville* that was Azouz's childhood home with a child's eyes, witnessing the shocking conditions with sincere sentiment. *Le*

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[140] Mehrez, "The Beur Writer," 36.

[141] Carrasco, "The Open City," 24.

Chaâba is a lot with a single stone building on the bank of the Rhône. It is owned by Azouz's father Bouzid, and around the house shacks have been built and filled with Bouzid's extended relatives. There is no electricity, no plumbing save a single pump near the river. The sanitary facilities consist of a disgusting privy in which the young Azouz was once dosed head to toe with the contents of a neighbor's chamber pot.[142] Yet despite the deplorable conditions and extreme poverty (Azouz frequently has three sugar cubes and a piece of bread for lunch), *Le Chaâba* is at times a paradise. The residents of *Le Chaâba* have the liberty to live more in line with their Algerian customs than with the norms of French society. There they have a community network that speaks Arabic, where they can celebrate as a group, and even slaughter meat in the way prescribed by Muslim law. The magic of the place for Azouz is due to how closely he is able to live with his cousins and uncles. The sense of community in the early novel is quite profound:

> I usually hated staying on for extra study at school because Le Chaâba was a marvelous place at dusk. With the return of our fathers from work the shantytown sparked back to life...The men formed a little circle in the yard. They were chatting, smoking, and savoring the coffee that their wives had carefully brought out to them. That evening my father seemed peaceful, soothed as usual by the Arabic music coming out of the wireless placed on the ground, in the middle of the circle, with its aerial fully extended.[143]

However, the world-within-a-world character of Le Chaâba is not without its faults. Azouz finds that his *Chaâba*–inspired Arabic occasionally embarrasses him in school, and indeed his interest in school threatens his status with his fellow *gones* from *Le Chaâba*. The three teachers that Azouz has throughout the book have different attitudes and approaches to Azouz, the first and third being particularly interesting to us. His first teacher, Monsieur Grand, I describe as a thoughtful "assimilist". His classroom clearly illustrates the blatant concealment of the imposition of a "pure" French identity without the confused racism that Azouz's second teacher, Madame Valard, will exhibit. That is to say, Grand is not opposed to Azouz's sudden desire to become a good student, and allows him to succeed through performing the exact work of his French classmates. Many of these lessons focus on proper hygiene and good behavior. Azouz resolves that he will be a good student: "I wanted to prove that I was capable of being like them, indeed, better than them. Even though I lived in *Le Chaâba*."[144] He knows precisely how to do this: "The teacher was always right. If he said we were all descendants of the Gauls, then he was right, and too bad if my folks back home didn't have the same mustaches as theirs."[145] It is reasonable to suggest that the material structures of home and school play a significant role in the formation of Azouz's identity.

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[142] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, 8.

[143] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, 48-49.

[144] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, 46.

[145] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, 48.

Both the theories of syncretism and displacement discussed earlier have some key resonances with the conditions early in the novel. Azouz in these younger days does seem to pursue a syncretistic goal, namely, to become French. And, the twin aspects of his life, Arabic-speaking *le chaâba* and the French *école* seem as caustically dichotomous as Hargreaves suggests. In several key scenes Azouz, unknowingly at first, sacrifices his Algerian identity in favor of a French one. He does lie as Hargreaves suggests, not only claiming Vercingétorix as an ancestor, but for a year claiming to be Jewish out of the fear that the two imposing Jewish classmates would persecute him if he said otherwise.[146] One of the most devastating examples of this betrayal comes during the day when the men are at work and only the women and children at at *Le Chaâba*. A group of police officers comes to investigate reports of an illegal slaughterhouse, and indeed there is such a place at *Le Chaâba* run by Azouz's uncle Saïd. To locate the slaughterhouse, the cops rely on Azouz, who guides them because he believes it is the right thing to do.[147] This event will start a chain reaction that will lead to the residents of *Le Chaâba* moving into the city, with the Begags being the last to do so. Both the notion of displacement and syncretism, can explain these details. From a syncretistic point of view, Azouz has recognized that the Arabic culture that his family represents will not allow him to succeed, so he abandons it in favor of a French one. And these negotiations betwixt and between the two modes are highly unstable, and characterized by white lies and accidental betrayals of the type Hargreaves pointed out are common. Yet Azouz does not seem to be able to realize his goal of success through assimilation, and there are more dimension to the in–between space in which he lives that we have yet to explore.

Early in the novel, the first of many times in which young Azouz will be accused by his fellow Arab classmates of not being an Arab, Azouz cannot think of a rejoinder: "Everything he said seemed obvious. I felt ashamed. I was scared. I could not answer back because I thought they were right."[148] Not long after that, however, he responds in a markedly different manner: "You're not an Arab! Of course I was! I was an Arab, and I could prove it: I had been circumcised just like them, three months earlier."[149] Azouz's painful circumcision was a powerful material reminder of his status as a fully-fledged member of the Arabic community. Syncretism is not a viable tool in this situation, as it would seem to require Azouz to the impossible, change his body, in order to assilimate. In this negotiation, too, Azouz powerfully questions the mutual exclusivity of cultures. Recall the image of the man straddling two chairs, each with an image of a place carved into their backs. Culture is being equated with territory. Mirelle Rosello problematizes this confluence, noting that when equated with territory, culture is

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[146] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, 156. While Azouz actually claiming Vercingétorix as an ancestor, which he may or may not have done, would seem to a be a lie of sorts, his telling us this in the narrative of the novel is highly ironic and is example of how Begag plays with the liminal situation in which he grew up.

[147] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, 100.

[148] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, 76.

[149] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, 86.

something that one can "belong to," and one can "belong to" only one.[150] It is not a material place that connects Azouz to his Algerian past, but the material structure of his own body. Another example will show this to be consistently true. When Azouz is about to enter the new *collége* after he and his family moved from *Le Chaâba*[151] and is waiting outside the school he spots another student in the crowd:

> In the distance, looking at the last list of names, I saw a "frizzy hair." He saw me too, stared at me for a minute, then looked away. He must have been lost like me, poor guy. He looked at me again, and I gave him a barely perceptible nod. He responded in an equally imperceptible manner.[152]

What passed between the two children in the schoolyard? They exchange a significant understanding, across a crowded yard, utterly outside the perception of the French students around them. This encounter, in and of itself, is not sufficient to prove that Azouz and the other Arab child possessed the 'epistemology of the colonized' as described by Ashis Nandy, but it certainly reveals layers of meaning to which the liminal immigrant children have access that the others do not. A more potent example of this 'epistemology' surrounds the climax of Azouz's time with Monsieur Grand. Throughout the year, Azouz has worked hard to keep *Le Chaâba* out of the classroom. He disguises stories of living in *Le Chaâba* as stories of vacationing in the country. On days while not in class, Azouz and his cousins sell flowers to the French in the market. One day, Azouz is shocked to find that his customer is none other than his teacher, Monsieur Grand. Terrified, Azouz runs from the market, fearing that all his hard work is lost, that Grand will now see him as a dirty ill–mannered child. But quickly, he has a revelation. This was exactly the best thing that could have happened. In his teacher's eyes, Azouz could not be more virtuous, more well-behaved: "But I was careful not to change the image that the teacher now had of me: a brave boy, full of goodwill. In a word, a child who knows how to behave correctly."[153] Azouz at that moment is not standing with one foot in and one foot out of the two cultures but within a Third Space somewhere between them. He gains awareness his teacher's inability to recognize his life in *Le Chaâba* as anything but romantic and noble. He has gained the 'double consciousness' of DuBois. This moment, and several others like it, demonstrates that Azouz's position is not as unstable as we might like to believe, nor that the cultures that he stands between are so mutually exclusive.

Le Gone du Chaâba seems to trouble theories like syncretism which depend on a sense of "territorialized" culture. Azouz, within the novel, seems to periodically stand firmly in a "space between" and exercise a subversive power over his French teachers and friends, but this does not establish a complete picture of a hybrid identity of the sort we previously explored. To investigate that we turn to the last section of the book and Azouz's third and final teacher, Monsieur

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[150] Rosello, "The Beur Nation," 16.

[151] Collège is roughly equivalent to middle school and lycée to high school..

[152] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid,168.

[153] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, 59.

Loubon. Loubon is a *pied–noir,* a French colonial from Algeria who repatriated after the Algerian war. In their very first meeting he and Azouz feel a special bond.

> He reached my row of desks and bent his head over my shoulder to see my name. I turned around. And, at that moment, when our eyes met and came together, I felt that deep inside this man there was something that resembled me and that linked us together. I couldn't tell what it was.[154]

Loubon immediately questions Azouz intensely, wanting to know his origins. Azouz is uncertain and justifiably concerned; his teachers have not always treated him well due to his race, and he is uncomfortable being outed in front of the class. Defensively, Azouz asserts that he was born in Lyon, at the Grange-Blanche hospital. Loubon's reply to Azouz's concern is, "So, let's see. I am French, but I was born in Algeria, and you were born in Lyon, but you're Algerian."[155] In that brief exchange a multiplicity of hybridities bursts forth. That culture is not tied to territory is made painfully clear. National boundaries confuse and complicate the search for origin, in addition to playing their part in its discovery. More importantly, Loubon reveals himself to be a liminal person, straddling the same cultural position that Azouz finds himself between. This meeting would facilitate Azouz finding his own place.

Though we have discussed the religious implications of identity creation, and the role that Islam plays for the French as evidence–of–colonialism, it now turns to see what role Islam may play in our case study. At first the presence of Islam in the novel can strike the reader as hardly overt. If the immigrants in *Le Chaâba* pray, it was not shared with us by the author. Nonetheless Islam runs through the book. Most commonly in the invocation of Allah. Azouz's parents, siblings, cousins, and friends all invoke the name of God at one point in the novel. Most frequently this occurs when either parent has some harsh words to deal to their children. Azouz, notably, does not personally invoke Allah in the book until a final scene, and I contend that this is representative with his uncertainty in his identity. A strike at the school presents the opportunity for the students to skip class without penalty, so Azouz does so. While he still has desires for academic success, he had all but given up working towards it, preferring to write bland and generic compositions that could not easily be accused of being plagiarized. Due to the strike, Loubon assigns a free composition and Azouz sees his chance. He pours his heart into a composition addressing the racism that he has felt in his life. For the first time, this is Azouz writing about the truth of his life, not calling *Le Chaâba* a day in the country. Azouz is not present in class to hear that the composition received the highest marks, and that Loubon read it aloud to the class. Azouz's moment of elation:

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[154] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, 171.

[155] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, 173.

In the name of Allah! Allah Akbar! I felt proud of my fingers. At last I was intelligent. I, Azouz Begag, the only Arab in the class, had got the best grade in the class, ahead of all the French pupils! I was dizzy with pride…[156]

"Allahu Akbar! God is Great! I felt proud of my fingers!" In this moment Azouz comes to find himself completely. It is a hybrid formation, the composition that finally granted him success in the "French" cultural framework of the school system was the unaugmented reality of his "Algerian" experience. The success in turn flows directly back into "Algerian" with an expression of gratitude to God. It is through the creative *interrelation* of the two cultures that Azouz comes to understand his place in the world.

Recall the emphasis on education in the previous two chapters. The French have long understood the school to be the site of cultural formation, and for this reason deployed the colonial discourses of control within those very spaces. It is the French schools in Algeria that promoted assimilation while secretly ensuring difference, and the *hijab* that must be kept out of the schools today. And yet it was the Young Algerians, educated in those colonial schools, that fomented for equal rights using appeals to French republican virtues. It was in the school setting that Azouz can to reconcile the two elements of his identity into a coherent hybrid whole, and it would seem the many of the schoolgirls shared this experience. One reported to a sociologist:

I became a practicing Muslim thanks to France, because it provides structures so that we might learn Arabic and our religion. I am glad to have come to know my religion, true Islam, because 'back there' it is too traditional and troublesome.[157]

While we can not see the Third Space, its effects seem clear. Muslims growing in France today come to their understanding of self and religion in the presence of material structures of control and concealment. The silent space created by these discourses prevents the colonizing culture's purity from been tainted and denies human legitimacy to the colonized. But as Charles Long illustrates, it is within those silent spaces that radically creative new religious forms can emerge. The positionality of Azouz Begag, stands unabashed in the space of cultural contact and is, itself, a potent critique of colonial discourses. *Le Gone du Chaâba* allows the reader to find him or herself in the coming of age story in the "slash" of history and witness the hybrid space in ways that would be impossible without it.

We must not take these hybrid formations to be monolithic. I have argued that the school served as a zone for both Azouz Begag and the *hijab* wearing schoolgirls to forge hybrid identities in the face of concealing discourse of control. I argue, following Charles Long, that these negotiations of consciousness constitute religious acts. In that sense we can understand Azouz Begag as acting

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[156] Azouz Begag, Shantytown Kid, 185.

[157] Bowen, Headscarves, 72.

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religiously, but it would be interesting to compare the hybridities of the schoolgirls and Azouz Begag. While the girls form an identity that is vocally, visibly and conspicuously religious, Azouz is not a practicing Muslim, and his positionality seems to embrace/contend with the western academy. I would encourage future studies to not underestimate the role of Islam in the creative formation of many *Maghrebis* whose attachment to the religion is not very strong. This is not so say that we should consider these individuals Muslims in the same sense as it may apply to the Lèvy sisters, but that we are not afraid to explore the role that Islam may play in the formation of consciousness in a colonial situation.

Both the novel and the *hijab* are potent material formations that challenge the discourses of colonialism. They do so by revealing that which the discourse conceals so as to make impossible. Neo–colonial discourses of control in France, following a history of colonialism in Algeria, delimit the possibility of "French Muslim" identities by concealing evidence of Islam, supposing that the there is something fundamentally oxymoronic about the union there implied. The image of a French schoolgirl wearing the *hijab*, and the hybrid language expressed in *Le Gone du Chaâba* both reveal distinct realities that directly undermine the discourse of control and make it possible to see beyond the discourse. In 1830, the French army assembled a printing press on the banks of the Mediterranean Sea, and in so doing seize power through the manipulation of discourse. The story of a boy's life on the banks of the Rhône enters the discourse in the form of a novel and subverts colonial power structures, sharing the possibility of a hybrid identity and revealing that which had been concealed.

Conclusion

It was not possible, nor was it my purpose, to provide an exhaustive analysis of French colonialism in Algeria. Rather, this thesis offers various case studies and examples to establish the validity of a methodology from the history of religions to the dynamics of the French–*Maghrebi* post–colonial situation. Contemporary France should be considered a colonial contact zone. The discursive practices of the French colonists of Algeria continue to hold power over discussions and practices surrounding the immigration and integration of Algerian immigrants in France today. Specifically, we have seen, through the treatment of Algerian histories, a discourse of primitivism that hinges on the religion of Islam. Unlike the United States, which Charles Long argues has discourses of colonial culture centered around race, Islam appears to be the "evidence of colonialism" that French Algerians use to separate themselves from the "other" represented by the Muslim Arab and Berber populations. An example of a colonial practice of this discourse was the French schools in Algeria, which promise a the opportunity for assimilation wherein the indigenous Muslims could be taught the virtues of French civilization. Those Muslims who responded to this promise discovered that the schools functioned to *re-enforce* the separation of Muslim Algerians from the French in colonial Algerian society. The school would continue to be a site where this discourse of primitivism would be deployed into the modern period. Both *Le Gone du Chaâba* and the law of secularity of 2004 demonstrated that the French school system, by in large, continues to promote an image of assimilation that calls for the abandonment of *Maghreb*-derived cultural values. The ultimate evidence of a failure to assimilate is, again, the evidence of Islam, such as the headscarves of the *hijabi* schoolgirls. Islam is the evidence–of–colonialism that must be concealed to maintain the mythically pure origin of French culture. Alec Hargreaves' thoughtful analysis reveals the hardships faced by individuals growing up within these structures of control and concealment. Azouz, in the novel, faces near continual conflict as his Algerian home life clashes with his French schooling. Yet, within these spaces of silence created by concealing discourses, powerful new meanings become available. Azouz comes to a hybrid understanding of self in *Le Gone du Chaâba*, one that admits Allah and Islam and blends it with the cultural space of France. In much the same way, French *hijabis* come to their understandings of Islam in the schools and in French society, and often oppose aspects of Islam from North Africa or the Middle East. These identities, therefore, prove the *possibility* of being a French Muslim that the discourse of integration seeks to render impossible. This thesis seeks to promote that message and suggest the value of these methods to approaching Islam.

There are complicating factors in the application of these methods to these data, and though alluded to, this thesis is not prepared to address them. Firstly, there are marked differences in the relationships between the more typical pairings in post-colonial studies (Native Americas, African Americans, and Hispanics in relation to European colonists and their decedents), and the "West" and Islam. Unlike the former examples that became aware of European civilization as an

outside colonizing force, Islam and the West share much of their history.[158] It is frequently argued that the Enlightenment was made possible by the Muslim translation of the classic Greek texts into Latin in Al-Andalus; Carl Ernst also suggests that Islam's development owes a great deal to the philosophies of the Greeks and Romans, and to the cultural and administrative aspects of the Byzantine Empire, as they were acquired by the Turks.[159] And, indeed, there has been a history of military conflict and conquest between the Muslims of the Mediterranean and Middle East and the Christians of Medieval Europe, which some scholars argue is still active today. Yet, all but three predominantly Muslim countries in the Middle East were subject to direct colonial control until as recently as 1962 when Algeria gained independence from France. Ernst is right when he argues for an understanding of modern Islam from within the historical context of colonialism.[160] The discourses of primitivism, of "othering" can be seen developing in the medieval competitions between Christendom and Islamdom, and the colonial application of these discourses clashed profoundly with the shared history remembered by many Muslims. The act of denying that shared history disrupted the mythic systems of understanding for Algerians and other Muslims in ways, I argue, that are quite comparable to the experience of Indians, Native Americans and other colonized peoples. This shared history provides the Muslim liminal individual with different discursive opportunities than other colonized individuals, a topic which could make for fascinating studies. Rather than this dimension serving as an objection to studies of this kind, I feel it encourages them. These situations have much more to teach the *theory* of religion and colonialism then what was accomplished here.

The second possible objection that could be raised with this project is more sensitive. The colonial discourse that this thesis has discussed was largely developed and deployed within the academy, of which I am a part. As a historian of religion, I strive to maintain reflexivity in my scholarship and to avoid perpetrating "new colonialisms." I must ask myself what harm this analysis may do, and one clear possibility comes forth. Some interpretations of Islam by believers understand *bid'a,* or innovation in religion, to be heretical.[161] In my desire to remove Muslims from a colonial-derived place of inferiority compared to Western cultural modes, I argued that the identities of these individuals displayed religious creativity, and that are *unique* hybrid formations of consciousness. I did this to challenge the colonial notion of Islam and *Maghrebis* as culturally poor, as well as the more sophisticated understanding of liminal being ceaselessly displaced. Through this analysis I may have suggested that Muslims in France express a creativity that for some constitutes heresy. As a non-Muslim scholar, I

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[158] C. W. Ernst, Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 7.

[159] Ernst, Following Muhammad, 9.

[160] Ernst, Following Muhammad, 12.

[161] Ian Richard Netton, Islam, Christianity and Tradition: A Comparative Exploration, (Edinburgh: Endiburgh University Press Ltd., 2006), 140.

do not think it is my place to engage in internal religious debates and challenge this suggestion. I will say, however, that it was not my intention to suggest that the Islam expressed and experienced by Muslims growing up in neo-colonial situations is any less fully "Muslim" on account of its potential hybridity. Rather, I contend that the power of the interstitial spaces found in colonial contact zones is the capacity to preserve colonized religion and culture within a new framework that acknowledges and engages the colonizing culture in ways that earlier identities could not. Both the Muslim school girls and Azouz Begag form identities that involve modes of expression that unmake dynamics of concealment. The sight of the scarves and the language of the novel impress upon the observer the incredible possibilities that exist in the formation of French Muslim identities.

This thesis is in many ways an appeal to future scholarship. Scholarship of Islam in the modern period would be enhanced and enriched by the applications of methods of the history of religions and post-colonial theory such as I have here sketched. These colonial contact spaces and the liminal people who come to their sense of self in them, offers scholars the invaluable opportunity to locate themselves in the (s)lashes of history and gain understandings of the hybrid formations within the academy as well. Post-colonial theory and post-colonial understandings of religion have much that they could gain from an investigation of Islam. Islam, and the experience of Muslims under colonialism, possess many dimensions which challenge the assumptions of this new interpretation of colonialism. The role that Islam plays in colonial dynamics of concealment in France and around the world could greatly enhance our understandings of the exchanges that take place between these cultures in contact and might make visible modes of being human that challenge mutually exclusive notions of civilization.

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