A TRANSNATIONAL CONVERSATION ON FRENCH COLONIALISM, IMMIGRATION, VIOLENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY

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FRENCH NEOCOLONIALISM AND DISCOURSES OF IMMIGRATION

Marshall: I thought we could begin talking about Nicolas Sarkozy's recent speech (July 26th 2007) at the University of Anta Diop, in Dakar, Senegal, where he addressed the "youth of Africa." I don't know if you've seen it?

Ticktin: No, I didn't.

Marshall: It's insane, quite frankly. It's essentially all about the backward Africans; how they're traditional and will never become modern.

Bacchetta: I too have not seen it, but would like to hear about it.

Ticktin: I haven't seen it either, actually.

Marshall: It's really shocking. There's been a big reaction on the part of the French Africanist and African community. Achille Mbembe has written a response.

Bacchetta: Oh, that's great.

Ticktin: I think I'm looking at the response by Mbembe right now. It's in *Africultures*?

Marshall: Yes, *Africultures*.
It's quite amazing, considering where we are today and what's been going on recently in Africa with respect to France, particularly in West Africa. Mbembe argues that we should just ignore it, it's so absurd and surreal.

Bacchetta: What was his point?

Ticktin: According to what Ruth has said thus far, in the speech, he was recapitulating Hegel's ideas about Africa, suggesting that there is no historical time in Africa, that Africans still measure time through nature, and that they need to be brought into History with a capital H.

Bacchetta: Hegel's *Philosophy of History,* in which he re-imagines the geographical borders and cultural status of Africa…But there is also a mythicized Africa, and especially African subjects, in philosophical and literary works prior to and during Hegel's lifetime: in Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, etc. The list is long. Anyway, in this racialized grid of intelligibility, Africa is characterized not only as lack and excess in relation to Europe, but as quasi-absent in relation to Europe. Hegel posits his Africa as outside History, lacking History, and as an excess of Nature in relation to Europe as Culture. And in his narrative of "progress": the "civilizating" of Africa is achieved through the Europeanization of Africa.
I haven't yet had a chance to read the Sarkozy speech in Dakar, but if it contains these Hegelian elements it's consistent with a vast realm of current dominant French racialized notions of postcolonial space and of people of color in France.

Bacchetta: That's a civilizing mission discourse, which is also a central element in current dominant French State and mediatic discourses about postcolonial immigration in France. The French State's policies of assimilating postcolonial immigrant subjects into some monolithic version of dominant

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French culture are in continuity with this civilizing mission discourse and practice. It just has such a long history…

Ticktin: Yes, what is striking is that he says it openly, without shame or embarrassment; he does not acknowledge that such thinking is grounded in French colonialism, and any number of racist practices. I don't think even Bush would do that.

Marshall: Oh, he's absolutely triumphal.

Bacchetta: Sarkozy's practices towards people of color are quite complex, and they have some parallels with the right-wing government in the U.S.

For example, on the one hand Sarkozy and Bush continue, reinforce and often reconfigure racist practices. On the other hand they both also designate selected people of color for high profile positions of responsibility in their cabinets. George Bush has deployed Condoleeza Rice and Colin Powell. Sarkozy has enlisted Rachida Dati as *Ministre de la Justice et Garde des Sceaux* (the top position in the Ministry of Justice which is responsible for the juridical system in France). This is the first time any person of Maghrebian origin has held such a high position in the French Government. Rachida Dati was born in France of an Algerian mother and a Moroccan father. It's significant that she does *not* come from a privileged postcolonial background but rather from a very modest immigrant working class family in which she was one of eleven children. Her background, her family, is more like the majority of second generation Maghrebians. She's supposed to serve as a symbol of successful assimilation.

And then there is Fadela Amara, the ex-President of the reformist women's group *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* (trans: "Neither Whores nor Submissives"), which was created in the suburban slums, who was appointed as Secretary of State in the Sarkozy government. *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* was, like *SOS Racisme,* heavily funded by the Socialist Party. Fadela Amara's parents are immigrants from Algeria, also working class, and she is also one of eleven children. Her trajectory, from *SOS Racisme* to *Ni Putes Ni Soumises,* to her current governmental position, is indicative of complicity, right and left, around racialized sexism and sexualized racism in France. She mainly made her name by denouncing young men of color and Islam as more sexist than thou. Remember, Fadela Amara testified for the Stasi Commission in favor of banning the Islamic headscarf in French schools. The Stasi Commission report weighed heavily in the passage of the 2004 law banning the headscarf.

Rachida Dati plays into the discourse of assimilation, and Fadela Amara into both assimilation and what [Gayatri] Spivak has called "white men saving brown women from brown men." Their conduct has been strongly critiqued by feminists of color and anti-racism groups.

Interestingly, there are no Maghrebian men in such high profile political positions. It's about producing women, who are cultural symbols, as assimilated figures to signify the success of the French civilizing mission.

Marshall: Well, it's also the question of what constitutes the place of Africa in global history, which is a huge, central question for Africans themselves. This is what Sarkozy said: (I'll try to translate it off the cuff) – "the drama of Africa is that the African man has not entered sufficiently into history. The African peasant, for thousands of years has lived with the seasons; his ideal of life is to be in harmony with nature, and he only knows the eternal recommencing of time, driven by repetition without end, of the same gestures."

Bacchetta: It's unbelievable.

Marshall: … "There is neither a place for human adventure nor the idea of progress. In this universe, where nature commands all, man escapes from the anxiety of history, which besets the modern man. But he stays unmoved, in the middle of an unchanging order, where everything is written in advance. He will never throw himself into the future, will never have the idea to leave repetition, or to invent a destiny for himself. That is the problem of Africa. That is the challenge for Africa - to enter into history." So this is Hegel.

Bacchetta: Yes, Hegel, and a whole list of his contemporary and subsequent scholars. I am thinking, for example, of Johannes Fabian's classic *Time and The Other*, in which he critically analyzes

how, across dominant Western/Northern philosophical, linguistic and anthropological theory, the West/North is positioned in the here and now, and the West/North's others are positioned in the (West/North's) past. He argues that the Dominant will not be able to fully recognize the Other as a subject until the Dominant understands the Other to be in coeval, present time.

Marshall: It's absolutely staggering that this is where we are at today, in 2007. And it makes me extremely depressed, considering what we've been saying for the last 40 years in our field, and certainly in the last 25. That the President of the French Republic can say this in Dakar, which was of course the pearl of French colonial power.
    To be able to say this today, and say it with certitude and conviction, it's really extremely discouraging, even though, maybe, as Mbembe says, we can just ignore it. Although he says many of the youth to whom it's addressed are quite convinced of this fact, which is actually even more depressing.
    I don't necessarily agree that most of African youth are in phase with this sort of talk, perhaps the ones addressed in Dakar: as Mamadou Diouf pointed out in his own response, nobody got up to leave in protest. But the youth that I'm researching in Côte d'Ivoire are more ambivalent on the question of this mythologized history.

Ticktin: Yes, it's really a question of what makes it okay to say something like that today. Why has it come to the fore again? What are the reasons? Not that it really went away, but what are the challenges?

Bacchetta: Yes, it never really went away. Such discourses can be articulated so clearly right now in France and be heard. The colonial grid of intelligibility that renders them meaningful, and renders critical discourse unintelligible, hasn't been sufficiently interrogated, deconstructed. A number of recent issues in France have brought these colonial-postcolonial discourses to the fore and reinforced them in the public space. I mean, discourses supporting the 2004 law that banned the Islamic headscarf in schools, discourses denouncing the 2005 revolts in the suburban slums, discourses in favor of the 2005 law that was to force teachers to teach the "positive role" of French colonialism, etc.

Ticktin: That's true.

Bacchetta: In France today, there is quite a paradox around colonial memory. On the one hand there is a dominant refusal in the public discursive space to grapple critically with French colonialism and its current legacy, but also what Spivak might call 'sanctioned ignorance' in academia too.
    For example, last year I participated in several academic conferences in Paris on "postcolonial theory" and over and over again the central focus was on British colonialism in India. There was very little discussion of French colonialism. It only came up briefly, almost as a sideshow, always in relation to references to francophone literature such as the work of the poet Khal Tullabully who founded the "coolisime" movement in literature and theory. There was no substantial discussion even of this important work.
    On the other hand, for a long time in France and the francophone world there has been an energetic production of francophone postcolonial theory, of critical studies of colonialism, slavery and immigration, and of critical of theories of "race." Why is this work not deemed relevant to discussions of postcolonial theory in France? Ironically, some of this work is actually integral, in translation, to anglophone postcolonial theory: [Frantz] Fanon, [Aimé] Cesaire, [Edouard] Glissant, etc. But there's so much that is not yet translated: Rabah, [Alain] Ruscio, Bilé, [Cheikh Anta] Diop, most of [Collette] Guillaumin's work, Bessis, [Nicolas] Bancel, [Pascal] Blanchard, [Arlette] Farge, most of [Francoise] Verges's work, [Benjamin] Stora, etc.
    In France there's a refusal to engage publicly with this body of work in any meaningful way. But I also think a similar mechanism exists in the U.S. For example, Native American critiques of U.S. colonialism are rendered unintelligible and marginalized, while postcolonial theory from South Asia, which mainly concerns British colonialism, has a certain currency.
    In France there are some activist-intellectual groups that have been somewhat successful at imposing a critique of French colonialism in the public discursive space, such as *Les Indigènes de la République* (The Indigenous of the Republic). Its feminist wing has a gendered, sexed analysis of colonial history and current practices in France. They have both been severely critiqued and marginalized,

including by most of the official Franco-French feminist movement and the left. There is also the CRAN (*Conseil représentatif des associations noires de France* or Representative Council of Blacks in France), a new coalition of over 60 Black activist-intellectual groups. The CRAN includes many women members but has no self-declared feminist wing as of yet. But outside the CRAN there are several Black feminist organizations, such as the MODEFEN or *Mouvement des femmes noires* (Black Women's Movement).

Ticktin: As you said, Paola, the issue of colonial memory or more aptly, colonial *amnesia*, is important and complex. It is also shaped by internal conflicts about who gets to speak for whom, and who is allowed to claim expert knowledge. I was discussing this issue recently with a French scholar, who will remain unnamed precisely because the stakes of these debates are so high. He mentioned that the young French historians who have in the past few years been carving out a space to examine what postcolonialism might mean in France, linking a history of colonialism to the current issues of immigration, have suddenly back-tracked in their claims. Now, they state that there is no clear or easy link between colonialism and the current forms of discrimination against immigrants and children of immigrants. It is ironic, but certainly not accidental that this happened just as activist groups like *Les Indigènes de la République* claimed and popularized postcolonial and anti-imperial discourses. They are appropriating postcolonial theory to make very specific political points, and the academics are not comfortable with their expertise being challenged, or their turf being encroached upon, so their response has been to deny the link between colonialism and immigration, in an attempt to reclaim the high ground.

Marshall: I think it's perhaps a question of generations as well, given some of the more militant positions, which some academics wouldn't be in agreement with. There has been a debate - especially concerning *Les Indigènes de la République* - about whether academics should take part in it, based on certain representations which they feel uncomfortable with. This may be unfortunate, but is pretty much par for the course when you drag academics into popularized interpretations of what they consider to be their domain of expertise. We also always have in France the revisionist historians - one can find them on colonialism, as on European history. When it comes to Africa, well, obviously it's really quite important. I can think of a few cases where there's been internal debate. For the most part, I do feel that the historians of colonialism in Africa have been more active than one might have imagined, but not active enough.

Bacchetta: I think that one of the moments that publicly revealed French amnesia, revisionism, but also polarization, around French colonialism was when the Law of February 23, 2005 (no. 158) was passed. Article 4 of that law stipulated that historians in publicly funded schools would be forced to teach about "the *positive role* of the French presence" in France's colonies "notably in North Africa," and to give "an eminent place" to colonial subjects in the French army, the collaborators, who made "sacrifices" for France. This resulted in a visible mobilization by historians, other academics, activists, and some politicians in France and in the francophone postcolonial world. For example Aimé Césaire, Édouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau in the Caribbean, and the President of Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, all publicly denounced the law. There were petitions, articles in the press, etc. in France and elsewhere. In Martinique a demonstration against the law drew about 1000 protestors.

In France those who opposed the law did so for different reasons. For the most vocal sector it was simply a question of academic freedom: the State should not dictate what and how historians teach. For some others, it became an occasion to finally insert a critique of French colonialism into the public discursive space. But ultimately it was the academic freedom discourse that won out and article 4 was deleted on that basis.

It's very difficult to put forth a critique of French colonialism in France. I know a lot of younger scholars who are fed up with this situation. They're producing some very interesting work.

Ticktin: Yes, there are scholars producing very interesting work, but much of the burden of this has shifted again to those outside France, rather than within, because of these turf wars over authority, science and truth.

Bacchetta: Right. Exactly.

Ticktin: This specifically reveals the link between truth and power – and yet with their actions, these scholars act as if such a link does not exist. They claim simply that they now see that "the evidence" does not prove the connection between the problems of colonialism and those of immigration. It is actually much more complex than this - what counts as evidence, for instance? One thing I find quite revealing and relevant to this debate is that Foucault's *History of Sexuality* isn't nearly as popular in France as it is in the US; that is, the link between truth and power, and of course sex and power, are not always easily acknowledged. In France, "science" - including social science – is still a particularly authoritative form of knowledge. In this sense, history as a science that makes truth-claims is being shielded from popular or activist knowledge, which in turn implicitly reproduces particular racial and class hierarchies in French society.

Marshall: Here Sarkozy is launching into ethno-philosophy, isn't he? It's quite extraordinary because after all, there's big questioning today on France's relationship to her ex-colonies. This focus on Africa, where immigration is really coming from, and causing a problem for public policy in France today, has given rise to a revitalization of the sort of myths that were propagated a century ago.

The thing I find quite interesting is that to a large extent, the same sorts of discourses are being proclaimed by those local organic intellectuals behind the vanguards, which today are defending neo-nationalist or neo-nativist or ethno-nationalist positions. And there is a circular discussion going on, but one which actually turns around the question of immigration more than one would suspect.

The kids that I work with in Côte d'Ivoire, the radical pro-regime youth, the militias and students' organizations, who are really the ones at the vanguard of the anti-French, anti-neocolonial movement, are extremely ambivalent when it comes to their place in the world and the sorts of rights they want to have for themselves, in particular with respect to being able to leave the Côte d'Ivoire and move to France.

So they are defending a neo-nativist, localized conception of citizenship which almost goes back to the village level, and a series of invented cultural practices and mythologized histories, putting into question a colonial ordering of labor and the valuation of various different groups, based on what are racial characteristics. At the same time, their real focus, it seems to me, is not the question of the local, but very much the question of how they are situated with respect to the West, and particularly to France. And their bid to realign with the United States as a sort of new savior who will help them in their struggle against France is an illustration of this. However confusedly, however contradictory their positions, it's precisely this sort of vision of history they're struggling against in a very violent fashion, even if through these struggles they unwittingly reproduce many of its same terms.

And it seems to me that most of the struggles of which the youth are a vanguard today in Africa are very much about giving a new account of the self and trying to find a place for themselves not simply in terms of the "local." which is of course itself a contested term, but also, and perhaps more importantly, in global history. So these struggles are new strategies of extraversion as much as they are what appears to be a narrow form of ethno-nationalism.

At the same time, they're basically saying we want to be treated like grownups. This is what the leader of one of the big militias in Abidjan told me: "we're doing all this so we won't have to depend on anybody, so that no one can tell us what to do." This is with respect to their own saga, as dispossessed youths involved in a generational struggle, but also with respect to the colonial saga and the struggles of their fathers and grandfathers.

And the argument they mobilize to justify a politics of xenophobia in Côte d'Ivoire is the famous immigration policy, inaugurated in the colonial period and carried on by [Felix] Houphouët[-Boigny] and the neo-colonial regime. They both valorize it as a sign of the country's openness, and stigmatize it with respect to immigration policies elsewhere, especially in France.
They say, why should we be open, when nobody else is? Why should we be treated as xenophobes? What we want is reciprocity; we want to be treated on an equal footing, we want a different ground to stand on in order to speak out against various forms of authority and power that keep us dependant. That's what these youths are talking about. Of course, their method is violence: "You can't be handed your independence. Real liberty isn't given, it's seized," is what these youth leaders say.
Basically what this whole struggle is about is the problem of sovereignty, identity, citizenship. Yet it's more about belonging in a more global sense, than it is really about national citizenship or national sovereignty, at least from the point of view of this particular generation. Given how cosmopolitan these kids are, it seems to be more about individual subjectivity.

Here's an example of the ambivalence of their discourse: The radical nationalist Ivorian youth who won a political speakers competition organized by the South African Embassy in Abidjan, and whose speeches are basically harangues against France, goes by the stage name of Jean Jaurès! In these popular forums, they spend hours haranguing France and the post-colonial pact, but at the same time their heroes and their ideals are all from this sort of mythologized France, which is still held up as a political ideal or standard according to which we should act and judge.

Between the young Africans, these organic intellectuals, and a discourse like Sarkozy's, there's almost a circular discussion going on. It's a mirror game. Even if the language is different, the terms in which many African intellectuals speak are fundamentally the same, as Mbembe argues.

<u>Bacchetta:</u> What you're saying is interesting. I'm particularly interested in your point about mythologized France as the supposed savior, as a discourse internalized by postcolonial subjects in Africa.

Within France right now such savior narratives are a dominant element within a whole grid of intelligibility through which postcolonial subjects, especially female subjects, get interpreted. But also postcolonial subjects in France are called upon, interpellated, to identify with, reproduce, and embody these narratives. All subjects in France at the moment are formed as subjects in the context of these discourses. They're everywhere. There's no escape.

I'm thinking, as just one flagrant sign, for example, about what sells in both wider public and academic bookstores these days. If you walk through Paris and look at what's promoted in the windows of bookstores you'll see that a significant portion of books they've put on display are personal narratives of Muslim women who denounce Islam. There's the work of Taslima Nasreen, Azar Nafisi, also the best-seller *Not Without My Daughter* by Betty Mahmoody, which was transformed into a film, and written by an American married to an Iranian Muslim, among others. There's a thick transnational traffic in so-called "authentic" female Muslim subjects, or even of non-Muslim women related to "authentic" Muslim men, denouncing Islam ostensibly "from within."

Similarly, Fadela Amara, the current Secretary of State, began her public career in *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* by denouncing suburban, slum hyper-aggressive masculinity and misogyny, a discourse that presumed France as savior.

It's only by representing oneself in terms of these kinds of "victimological" narratives that postcolonial women subjects, these days in France, are recognized as existing at all. These discourses are enthusiastically promoted and rewarded. In contrast, if you try to critique this dominant demand for "authentic" denunciations of postcolonial culture or religion you get rendered unintelligible, accused of loving your own victimhood, of colluding with your "real" oppressor (the men of one's own postcolonial culture), or erased altogether.

This situation has several effects. It severely limits and polices subjects who are women of color. It also closes off dominant subjects even while comforting them. To address this, some feminists and queers situated within postcolonial cultures have argued that all public critiques of postcolonial culture should end. They want especially women and queers of color to keep quiet about what they identify as injustices within communities of color. This is equally problematic. It silences *all* critique. It reinforces the same relations of power that produce the generalized demonization of postcolonial cultures and the disciplining of women in the first place.

Maybe one way to work against the racialized demonization, against the recuperation as victim into savior narratives, but also against the forced silence, at once, is to put forth a more complicated critique that is more grounded, but also transnational and sensitive to genealogies of the present. For example, we could work to make it clear that postcolonial cultures are neither the 'origin' nor the epitome of sexism., and that the criteria of Franco-French feminism for deciding what is and is not sexist are not universal.

But also, we can point out that in France, Franco-French women are the majority, and they are still targets of misogyny - by Franco-French men. Franco-French women are battered by Franco-French men everyday. They're raped and murdered. But this information doesn't even make it to the small print of newspapers. Franco-French women are positioned at lower rungs in the labor hierarchy in relation to Franco-French men. More of them have part-time jobs. They're paid less. Notwithstanding the Parity Laws, they have unequal political representation. And the list goes on. Why do they imagine they're freer than women of color?

Also, we could try to make it clear that dominant French culture and postcolonial cultures have been co-produced, historically, together through a colonial relation that has largely shaped the contours of the formation of subjects, objects, conduct and conditions in both contexts. They're intimately linked.

Marshall: Yes, I think so too. The question would be to look at the colonial moment as an important epistemological rupture in which the problematic of authenticity becomes central and perhaps its most important effect. Given that fact that there emerges a possibility of recognizing themselves as authentic, what part does that play in their constitution as subjects?

And I agree with Mbembe when he says that the appropriation of the problematic of authenticity by Africans, but also the study of Africa, has fundamentally determined the terms in which Africans continue to construct their discourses on themselves. It's remarkably resilient, this discourse: as he puts it, the current rise of nativisms or new anti-imperialisms, new ethno-nationalisms are "the most recent resurrection of a corpse which continues to rise after each burial."

This question of the mythologizing of France appears to be concerned with the ways in which France can stand for a series of universals. And the endless problem of how to reconcile the radical disjuncture between all these localities, particularities - in Africa, North Africa - and these so-called universal values for which this vision of France is supposed to stand. How might it be possible, and on what terms, to give an account of the self which enables an entry into global history?

And also, it involves a revision of a very traumatic history. I think this is a generational question. There is at the moment something very interesting going on in terms of a generational shift. Perhaps more significant, or as significant, as what happened in the late colonial period in the 30s and 40s, is when you have a big generational crisis within a continent, and lots of unprecedented struggles on the part of younger generations in view of opportunities being offered. It's probably a lot more violent and chaotic than it may have been in the past. But it seems to be very much about these questions of trying to develop new accounts of the self, new forms of subjectivity and new modes of subjectivation in a context of extreme insecurity.

To some extent there is this hegemonic intellectual grid or discourse within which everybody seems to be stuck, turning in circles. But I think there is something else, something new going on which is hard to give a name to.

THE GENDERING OF VIOLENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY

Ticktin: I want to back up for a moment to bring together what you have each been saying, Paola and Ruth. In particular, I'd like to think about the role and place of violence in post-colonial struggles, and the connection between violence and universalisms. So far, we've been talking about political formations that are the result of universalisms; namely, colonialism as a universal civilizing mission, one that promised universal truth and progress. We've been talking about the effects of colonialism both in Côte d'Ivoire and in France. So what differences are we seeing in the way that these histories of universalism are being contested? When does violence help to contest forms of domination based in universalist ideologies, and when does it help to reproduce domination? Paola, you were saying that women of color must play the role of victim, as all the highly visible testimonies by Muslim women now show, yes? In all of these, Muslim women are narrated as the victims of barbaric Muslim men, and the victims of the violence of Islam itself.

Bacchetta: Yes.

Ticktin: In this sense, the tropes of violence against women do the same work as they did during the colonial era, to name certain types of people as "uncivilized" or "unmodern." This strategy – this understanding of what constitutes violence, and who performs violence -- is being reconfigured to name Muslim men as uncivilized, as un-French. Here, violence does not work to contest colonial formations – rather, it is used to reproduce them. On the other hand, Ruth, you have said that in Côte D'Ivoire, violence is serving as a tool of liberation against not only colonial formations but forms of neoliberal global domination. It is the only way to seize one's liberty.

What can we say, then, about the place of violence? What form of power is it? Of course, we get into the questions that [Frantz] Fanon raised in the context of French colonialism in Algeria. When is violence considered war, when is it liberation, when is it domination, when is it terrorism? Do we need it in

struggles for emancipation? And yet, how can we speak about violence without reproducing certain forms of domination? And how is violence linked to universalism, as a "universalizable," translatable form of power – one of the few, perhaps, that marginalized people have access to? And finally, how do universalisms in turn spawn violence?

Bacchetta: I think the universalism we're talking about, French universalism, is one particular form of universalism in the world among many. It was formed through the specifics of France's national and transnational history, including French Catholicism, France's dominant religion.

The question of violence that you both have raised in the contexts in which you work makes me think about a whole range of violence by which people of color in France are targeted: physical, psychic, social, etc.

I also want to recall the dominant deployment of discourses about violence by people of color that are used to reinforce the idea of people of color as subjects-out-of-control. For example, the suburban slums revolts that began in Clichy-sous-Bois (in the outskirts of Paris) on October 27, 2005 and then quickly spread, were a response to the deaths of two young men of color, Bouna Traoré who was 15 years old and Zyed Benna who was 17. They had been playing soccer with friends in their neighborhood. The police arrived. All the guys dispersed to avoid police harassment. Bouna, Zyed and Muhittin Altun, a 17 year old, ran and hid in a nearby electric grid. Bouna and Zyed got electrocuted there. They died. And Muhittin was very badly burned.

Now, why did they flee? They fled because they were used to police harassment around identity card controls. In their neighborhood, such harassment has sometimes resulted in getting beaten. Though more rarely, it can also result in getting killed. Bouna and Zyed and everyone else knew very well that the State does not value their lives. Just four months prior to the revolt Sarkozy himself had publicly said he would clean out the youth of the suburban slums with high-pressure hoses. Two days before the revolt he had called them "scum." This was the atmosphere of harassment and public disrespect. So when Bouna, Zyed, Muhittin and everyone else playing soccer saw the police coming towards them they ran and hid. And Bouna and Zyed died.

Yet what got remembered by the State and the dominant media as the ultimate violence was not that Bouna and Zyed actually died. They didn't think of the ongoing police harassment, which included physical violence. They didn't think of Sarkozy's pronouncements as psychic violence. They fixated on the conduct of the youth who responded to their friends' deaths by revolting. That's the conduct that got framed as the ultimate violence.

The revolts were called "riots" so that they could be depoliticized and criminalized. The State and media used that moment to reinforce dominant constructions of young men of color as hyper-aggressive, chaotic, and out-of-control.

This is a population that has long been silenced, made invisible, whose mobility has been curtailed, and who has been the object of all sorts of violence. That revolt was a spontaneous modality of expression: of tremendous grief, of frustration, of disgust, but I think even of hope. It was collective action.

Ticktin: Yes, it is important to think about the so-called riots, and about the gendering of violence as a mode of expression – women of color must be saved from it, while men of color -particularly Muslim men - are seen as limited to using violence as their one means of expression. But I want to think about how violence also allows for a form of universality, in a different sense than I mentioned earlier; violence is predicated on a foundational notion of the frailty of the individual body – in the face of violence, each body is a body like any other, it can suffer the same physical violations, and feel the same pain. One might even argue that in this sense, violence is the only universal. Torture plays on violence as a universalizing gesture; it is predicated on an understanding of other human bodies as equally vulnerable, and it assumes an intimate understanding of pain.

Bacchetta: You're right, Miriam, to evoke the centrality of the body.

The 2005 suburban slum revolts began after the extreme violation, the total annihilation, of the bodies of two young men of color.

But the revolt that followed the deaths was primarily about attacking property, burning it to nothingness. They threw a few stones at a few cops, sure, but mainly it was about attacking property. And not just any property, cars especially, but also businesses and to a lesser extent some institutions of the state such as schools and community centers. These are not neutral objects and sites. To attack them is

to act against a whole range of living conditions: the lack of mobility (vs. cars as a symbol of mobility), rampant unemployment and lack of capital (vs. businesses), substandard education and assimilation practices (schools), and hopelessness around the social (community centers).

But in fact, Miriam, you are right to say that the body is central. We're talking about acts that are performed by the body. The burning, walking from one neighborhood to the other, gathering in the streets… But also, there is something about the centrality of the visual in it: to ignite that flame, to watch that burning.

Unfortunately I was not in France during the revolt. But I watched it closely on cable French TV and kept in close contact with friends by phone. I remember how I felt when I saw cars burning in suburban slum areas I had worked in, lived in, and even at the Place de la Bastille in Paris, one of my old neighborhoods.

I felt a sense of exhilaration and relief. I felt the intensity of the moment magnified by other periods I lived through, especially in the 1980s when Franco-French men attacked young men of color on a regularly basis. You know, during the mid 1980s there was a murder a week for awhile in immigrant neighborhoods in Paris and its suburban slums. We used to protest each time. But here in 2005 was a much wider revolt that had spread throughout France and some other parts of Europe. This gave me hope. I hoped the revolt would lead to new organizing. I hoped that living conditions in the suburban slums and inner cities would become part of a wider conversation….

The 2005 revolt had many effects. On the one hand it was recuperated immediately by the bio-political State and served as a pretext for more repression. On the other hand, it definitely gave rise to activist groups working on longer-term resistance.

Marshall: I'm wondering about this type of violence, which is all too easily assimilated into categories of marginal behavior which have to do with delinquency, vandalism and various easily marginalizable types of practice or social categories.

This in contrast to war itself, which would be the case in many Africans' situations, and not simply in Côte d'Ivoire, but in other places, where we can see developing a totally new conception of what liberty should be. It has to do with being able to dominate others, and to seize what one wants to seize. There is some ideological, political content to the violence, but much less than is proclaimed. It seems to me as much about the individual self, and what this individual self can do, what means are available to it to be able to have power in a situation of total powerlessness.

And it seems, in this sense, as Mbembe argues, both religion and war have a privileged place as instituting social imaginaries, in a radical sense. Much more than they might be in France, where there's a bio-political form of government perfectly tuned to be able to deal with, respond to and circumscribe these discourses; and also physically, the sorts of outbreaks that you get in the banlieues. Whereas in Africa, we don't really have, despite colonial history, these sorts of bio-political techniques at work; we aren't dealing with that type of government at all. And what one sees, more than anything else, is a failure of the techniques deployed by the state, those techniques which underwrote the colonial ordering and disciplining of space and bodies, according to various categorizations, in particular race. Government takes the form of a hybrid, in which various different forms of predation are central, and which are more related to the old model of sovereignty under the monarchy than a bio-political model of rule.

Ticktin: Can you say more? Why is it related to a sovereignty-kind of rule, rather than a bio-political one?

Marshall: Well, one doesn't have to be Foucauldian about it, but I will be for the sake of argument. Sovereignty as a shorthand, because one can observe practices which are akin to those found in the old model of sovereignty under the monarchy, where power can be resumed by 'the power to kill and let live', as opposed, in a bio-political model, to 'the power to make live, and let die'.

Under the old model, violence, and exercise of power is extractive and predatory in a very extravagant and unproductive way. Modern forms of government depend upon bio-political techniques of power, which have the management of a population as their object. Despite what historians argue about colonial history and the application of these sorts of techniques, whilst they create an order of difference which has really important effects, the actual techniques of government, the exercise of power, still take this hybrid mode, in which extraction, unproductive expenditure, predation, the extravagance and excess

of violence are central. Not least because of course, the colonial regimes were themselves hybrid; alongside the bio-political techniques of the "civilizing mission" one finds this almost libidinal excess of violence.

Today you can see, in the ways in which African states govern their populations, that what one would strictly call bio-political techniques are up to something else. These techniques, their institutions, exist, and yet insofar as they are applied, the political ends to which they're put are different. And so violence itself, and the way in which the body becomes both the subject and object of violence, is quite different.

To turn to the question of gender, it seems to me that one of the central issues becomes the redefinition of manhood in a situation where mastery is elusive, and self-mastery in particular. So on the one hand, youth are putting into question the social categories that have held up until then, the criteria of what makes one a man - which is to say, acquiring a certain social status with respect to women, with respect to marriage, with respect to goods, with respect to an ability to redistribute.

So these categories, which are fairly long-standing, have been put into question, but at the same time, this questioning in its current form hasn't opened up a space in which women could find themselves behaving other than as the objects of male power. I mean, there have been changes but I am quite discouraged to see the extent to which the rise of violence on the part of the youth has not enabled a parallel space for women in which they can assert their own political, but also physical integrity. And in many respects women have become more victimized than they were, let's say, 15 years ago. Issues around which questions of manhood are determined, show how women play the role of spoils of the war, how the violent acquisition of women becomes a sign of power, etc. The ways in which women's bodies have become central to this new quest for liberty are really quite alarming. And certainly the sorts of debate one gets in France around women's integrity and women's right to choose and so on, are not played out in the same way in the African continent.

Bacchetta: What you're saying, Ruth, about violence makes me think about the situatedness of claims about violence and their imbrication in relations of power.

The State and dominant media called the 2005 suburban slum revolts violent. Those revolting were transformed into the sign of unruly, out-of-control people of color. Yet there has been massive amnesia about the fact that other not particularly peaceful revolts, when conducted by Franco-French subjects, have been interpreted quite differently. The French Revolution, for example, was not peaceful. The 1968 so-called revolution included the destruction of property, barricades, chaos, and confrontations with the police. But the subjects who engaged in these have not been demonized.

There's also massive amnesia about the racialized violence perpetuated against people of color by Franco-French subjects. Each time these acts of violence occur, the perpetrators get represented as exceptions. They're not made to symbolize the whole of Franco-French society. In contrast, the 2005 suburban revolters were constructed to represent the entire category of young men of color in France.

This is also linked to the question of how visibility and invisibility get produced and deployed. The visual can become a stratum of pedagogical importance to produce "evidence" to confirm racialized, gendered, sexed assumptions about subjects of color. I'm thinking, for example, about what [Nicolas] Bancel, [Pascal] Blanchard and others have called "human zoos." These were the colonial exhibitions in Paris and other European capitals in which colonial subjects were imported, placed in fabricated "native" scene sets, and put on display as entertainment for European spectators.

For Bancel and Blanchard these exhibitions mark the expansion of scientific racism into "popular racism." The bodies deployed in that process, however, are not outside of gender. We can learn much if we remember the agonizing trajectory of heavily trafficked subjects such as Sawtche (the birth-name of the woman whom Europeans renamed as Saartjie Baartman and referred to as the Hottentot Venus). There is also the colonial fixation on the Black penis; I am thinking of Serge Bilé's study. This was about the centrality of the body in what [Anne] McClintock calls the "porno-tropics" or the colonial construction of colonial sites and subjects as screens onto which the colonizer projects his (or her) own forbidden desires, always at the expense of his (or her) others.

Historically the signs, body parts, and meanings of objects of gendered, racialized, and sexed spectacularization shift quite a bit. For example, in France it has only been since 1989 that the headscarf has been produced as the ultimate privileged sign of Islamic victimization of Muslim woman, as an intolerable sign. Yet the Islamic beard, also a potentially spectacularizable sign that could be deployed as

corporeal "evidence" in dominant fantasies about Islamic male hyper-aggression, is not currently an object of dominant affect or juridical interdiction. The beard is not even an object of discussion.

I think it's significant to analyze what becomes the focus of gendered, racialized affect and juridical action in any particular period, and under what conditions. It can tell us a lot about the particular forms of gendered racialization that are happening.

Ticktin: You're completely right about the violence of the so-called riots: that is, the state gets to call the uprisings violent, they get to represent those in the *banlieues,* or suburbs, as unruly, because the state has a monopoly on violence. When the state commits violence, it is not called violence.

Bacchetta: Right.

Ticktin: It's interesting to think about what you were saying, Paola, about visibility and invisibility: I am having a hard time thinking about how to render violence visible, in a way that does justice to those who are the most disenfranchised. On the one hand, the violence of men of color is hyper visible, because it serves to label them as unruly and uncivilized. But, Ruth, you have been speaking of the violence that women in Côte d'Ivoire experience at the hands of the young men there, who are using violence against their own conditions of disenfranchisement. How do we then speak about violence against women of color, without furthering Sarkozy's discourse on Africans or the French discourse on the barbarity of immigrants?

RELIGION, LABOR, AND CONFLICTS OVER CULTURAL BELONGING

Marshall: These African youths are very savvy, because they're perfectly aware of the sorts of discourses that go on in France, and are capable of taking up discourses like those of [Jean-Marie] Le Pen and the *Front National*. I've heard Le Pen being cited positively in these popular 'parliaments' by these young Ivoirians with respect to their own problems of immigration.

The immigration question extends, basically from the village outward to the global level, where a young person finds himself or dreams of finding himself outside of his country. The question becomes, what sort of host will these people be to us, and what sort of hosts should we be to the people that come to our place?

And this central question, which engages the politics of hospitality, turns on the ways in which the whole history of Côte d'Ivoire, which is quite exceptional in many respects, has been put into question. But the arguments that are being marshaled are very much the same ones that are being put forward by French state policy.

Meanwhile, in the Ivorian case, there is evidence of a long-standing state policy of identifying and situating populations according to racial categories, which is clearly a colonial policy. Colonial policy distinguishes between the unruly southern 'savages' and the mobile northern trade people, who were positively valued by the colonials in a very ambiguous way. The valorization of immigrants and migrants continues in post-colonial policy until the early 1990s.Today, the immigrants and the migrants, those who are mobile, those who have access to various networks of extroversion are being stigmatized and chased off the land by the regime and its youth vanguard, which basically amounts to trying to turn the clock back on history. The central question in this revision turns on the problem of memory, both collective and individual, in particular the memory of various forms of violence and how one might be able to reconstitute a present and imagine a future through new practices of remembering.   And this prompts another question: is not religious conversion and religious revitalization about many of the same questions? It seems to me that this return to origins, which is part of a neo-nativist discourse in Africa, and which we can also see in a politics of nostalgia in France, let's be quite frank, is played out in different ways in the African continent. And one of the modes in which this concern for the purity of origins has been expressed can be found in the rise of both Islamic reformism and Pentecostalism. These two religious forms, which are now the central religious forms in Africa, engage with the same concern, rewriting history and rethinking memory with respect to narratives of origins and other modes of imagining the self.

The same social groups involved in much of the political violence in the continent today are also the very groups that constitute these new religious vanguards. Many of these kids who are involved in very violent militia activities, political propaganda, but also killings and organized rebellion are the same ones who are propagating either Islamic or reformist type of discourse, or Pentecostalism. At the heart of all of these discourses is the concern with a new way of being a 'modern' subject of universal history.

Ticktin: Yes, what you're saying about religion, Ruth, makes me think about the connection between violence and religion; that is, if violence is about individual bodies, religion is about social orders, and collective projects. I think we need to place this conversation about violence and religion into a larger one about labor, and neoliberalism. In *Planet of Slums*, Mike Davis argues that one of the defining aspects of our times, particularly with respect to the global south, is that there is a growing universe of slums and shantytowns, but this urban population growth comes without economic growth. He draws on a report produced by the UN which shows that in a relatively short period, this urban population will be almost completely removed or dis-incorporated from the supply of formal jobs – nearly two fifths of the population will be informal workers. He calls them the "outcaste proletariat," which is the fastest growing class on the planet and yet the most novel, in that the informal working class does not have the strategic economic power of socialized labor. In this context, if one cannot organize around labor, what does one have to offer, what does one have to fight back with? What shape can resistance take? Violence, perhaps; the mobility of the individuals, perhaps; but perhaps also religion.

Marshall: Well, it's an excellent question, and one of the central paradoxes about this situation has been the fixing of labor in the face of incredible flux and new globalized mobility. And this has been, obviously, the central crisis in Africa, where between 60 and 75 percent of the population is either under 30 or 25 - with no organization, no skills, no prospects and no mobility.

And so it's not surprising to see violence crystallizing over questions of mobile and non-mobile populations. And with the whole territorialization of citizenship, fixing of identity and belonging in specific spaces, and crystallizing around questions of land and heritage, it seems to me, very much connected to global problems of labor. And the way in which it's politicized in the west, is also increasingly so. But also, religion doesn't just stand in for other modes of organization that might not be available to actors. I don't buy the old Marxist view of things – I think it's more radical than that, even if there's no doubt an element of truth in it.

Bacchetta: Yes. But anyway, France's colonial strategies and policies took on different forms depending on the colonized site in question.

I'm thinking of what you said, Ruth, about nomadic and stable populations. A number of scholars of Algeria have argued that the French strategy in Algeria was exactly the opposite as what you describe in the Ivory Coast. That is, in Algeria the French preferred spatially fixed populations because they felt they could better control them, and demonized nomadic populations to a greater extent. Today in France the distribution of racialized populations, their fixities and mobilities, correlate to some degree with colonial Algerian spatialization. Certain neighborhoods in Paris resemble the segregated "European city" in Algiers. Paris' suburban slums resemble its "Arab city."

When the spatial mobility and spatial flows of postcolonial subjects are discussed in France they are often associated with traffic in bodies, drugs, black market goods, or even music (entering France, polluting the French language, etc).

While this situation is different from what you describe for Ivory Coast, in both sites it seems that a binary between the nomadic or mobile, and the stationary or stable, is produced and maintained.

Marshall: One of the questions in colonial West Africa was creating value and having access to labor and the problem they had with most of the small coastal groups and how their socio-political makeup made them extremely resistant to colonial labor policies. Once you've pacified populations, which is the first thing the colonial campaigns did, then you have to deal with putting populations to work. Basically the creation of value in agricultural surpluses depended on having access to a population of labor, and the mobile groups were ideal for solving this problem. So it's got a great deal to do with states of the economy and what kinds of values and surpluses can be drawn from different populations, and at what times. And obviously, the paradox now is that with respect to the problem of immigration and the problem of African youth, it's not even any longer a question of the value of labor.

Because the discourse on the part of many youths is not that we are prepared to die in order to immigrate, but that we are already dead. And it follows, that, in this present state, we have no value whatsoever, our labor has no value, and given our situation here, there is not even any space for hope of some future value. 'Immigration-suicide' they call it: in any case, as we're already dead, what do we lose if we die on the way? If we can manage to escape, this is a form of resurrection. In many respects, it takes

the form of a discourse on the miracle – the miraculous creation of value from nothing. However, this experience is not seen in collective terms. There isn't, to my knowledge, any sort of collective reflection on the state of affairs where an entire population, according to the standard economic categories of value, considers itself to be without value. This is a situation which, it seems to me, while it may not be unprecedented, is quite novel in many ways.

If you look at the types of risks the youth are prepared to take, even just to end up in the most precarious situations in a very hostile environment where they have very little chance of succeeding – hiding in airplane landing gear and dropping out into back gardens around Roissy for example, or taking these totally un-seaworthy boats from Senegal to the Canaries - what does this signify? And what does it say about the violence that is perpetrated locally? Obviously, the problem of dying, of death, becomes central - I don't want to say that this is a necro-politics or a thanato-politics - but it is something quite different than the sorts of issues brought forward by a bio-political form of government and its modes of constructing subjectivities. It seems to me that there's something novel going on, and I don't know if we quite have the language or the theoretical tools to really cope with it. But, with respect to questions of individual value, it seems to me that the religious have an overwhelming symbolic force in these kinds of situations.

Bacchetta: I think the feeling of "we're dead" and "we could be dead" that you evoke, Ruth, also animates many struggles in France. Religion, too, has a certain symbolic force. In suburban slums and immigrant neighborhoods only a very small percentage of youth belong to organized religions. But I think the force of religion can be expressed elsewhere, even by totally a-religious subjects. An example is in the concepts of justice and injustice that are drawn, in this context, from the convergence of Islam and Catholicism. Let's remember, too, that in these struggles there is a remarkable desire to live. The 2005 revolts were about both death and a desire to live. To act, to struggle, is also to confirm that one is alive.

The flip side of this is the unavowed place of religion in the official definition of French Republicanism, which, as [Herman] Lebovics in particular eloquently demonstrates, has been reformulated over and over again historically.

I'm thinking, for example, about the place of religion in the shift in State immigration arrangements from "insertion" to "integration" after the 1980s. Until the mid 1970s immigration was mainly about male labor. In the mid 1970s with "family reunification" laws women and children with kinship attachments to male laborers (husbands, fathers, brothers) began to arrive. "Family reunification" was about stabilizing the immigrant labor populations. But it was also about State misogyny and queerphobia. Women immigrants' juridical status was made to depend completely on the status of their male counterparts. Queer immigrant subjects who were outside of hetero-normative kinship relations were excluded as juridical subjects. Today about 50% of immigrants are regulated by the "family reunification' laws. It's enormous.

During the 1980s, the State focused on the "insertion" of immigrants into the economy as workers and as consumers. In practice, "insertion" was very much about bio-politics, counting, technocratic control and the management of immigrants. Undocumented immigrants were called out of the shadows to register with the State. Measures to prevent further immigrant entry were enhanced. The state set up a so-called "right-to-return" (to the postcolony) policy whereby immigrants were expulsed. I remember at that time a central slogan in our demonstrations was: "They're talking about insertion, they're preparing expulsion." The point is that the French State was pre-occupied with controlling its immigrant labor force, and not religion.

The 1980s was also a period of intense cultural and economic work. The second generation came of age. In 1981 the Socialist Party came into power. It legalized immigrant organizations. The massive Beur and anti-racism marches made cultural and economic demands. The first march that couldn't be ignored was the 1983 Beur March Against Racism and For Equality that culminated in Paris with tens of millions of participants. Some of the slogans of the period are quite revealing: "We Are Here Because You Were There"; "Right to Difference"; "France is Like a Motor Bike, It Needs Hybrid (Fuel); and "Black, White, Beur"(as a riff on the French patriotic slogan "Blue White Red," referring to the flag). At the same time, immigrant workers continued to struggle around a long list of demands to improve working and living conditions.

In the 1980s there was one murder after another of young men of color by white Franco-French men. We demonstrated every time. In Paris, every day, the police combed the subways and streets to look for brown and black subjects without identity cards. Yet, there was a lot of solidarity among us in the

streets and in the subways. That part of it was very comforting and gave us all hope. That hope carried over into our movements. We were convinced that we could change the situation together.

Though this has been erased in accounts of "French feminism" there have been feminist of color organizations in France since the 1970s. By the 1980s there were a plethora of groups: Tunisian Women's Group, Movement of Black Women, Algerian Women's Group, The *Nanas Beurs*, Feminist Collective against Racism and Anti-Semitism (of which I was a co-founder), even the Lesbian Collective Against Racism and Fascism (of which I was also a co-founder), and many more. There was intense cultural production: in music (Rap, Rai, Hip Hop, Chaabi), literature, art, *verlan* (language created in suburban slums by reversing syllables of words in French), the stylistics of clothing, and Beur film. Somewhat later there was Radio Beur and then Beur TV (created in 2003). Feminists of color were totally integral to this. There was Melaaz's music, Badia Haj Nassar's novel, theatre groups, etc. France, officially, seemed to be somewhat open to these cultural productions. Even Jacques Lang (Minister of Culture) talked about "the right to difference." Of course, some of this cultural production was immediately inserted into transnational capitalism's flows: francophone Rap, Hip Hop, dance, clothing, etc.

But anyway, by 1989 a very definite shift started to take place in State and media discourses. It was no longer about economic "insertion," and the "right to difference" was over. The State now talked about cultural "integration" and assimilation. And among other things, it started to seriously demonize Islam.

In 1989, suddenly the Islamic headscarf was identified as a problem and outlawed. There had been a number of earlier incidents of headscarves in schools, but each time the State had confirmed it was fine to wear them. Suddenly in 1989 this changed.

By 1994 (in the Clermont-Ferrand decision) the headscarf was constructed as a sign of "extremist religions of foreign origin" with "international objectives" and as "threatening French laws and institutions." Saddek Rabah's analysis of media discourse, and Pierre Tévenian's study of State discourse, both provide excellent accounts of this shift in which what they both call the Islamic "piece of cloth" gets suddenly transformed into a sign of an Islamic transnational political project out of control.

This re-signification of the headscarf is very complicated. I think one aspect is that it was deployed to position Islam as a threat to *laïcité* and the nation-state's sovereignty much as transnational Catholicism had been in the past. They're constructed as coming from outside and being controlled from outside: for Catholicism the Vatican; for Islam "the Middle East" and "the Maghreb."

Another aspect is, of course, the barrage of misogynist and queerphobic colonial claims that got revived. They made the headscarf a sign of Muslim male control over women. They presented female bodily exposure as a sign of equality. They congealed in the headscarf a variant of an old savior narrative: before it was Franco-French men, now it's the French State that treats women better and that will save Muslim women from Muslim men.

The official Franco-French feminist movement has reproduced these dominant notions, with very few exceptions. They massively, publicly called on the State to ban the headscarf, and thus the girls and women wearing them, from schools. The notion of a Muslim woman who decides she wants to wear the headscarf, for whatever reason, but especially for reasons of faith, is beyond the imagination of most of the Franco-French feminist movement at this time. For them, she's an impossible subject.

This past summer, in a paper I presented in Paris on lesbians of color in France I happened to mention, among many other modalities of oppositional and non-oppositional resistance, the presence of veiled lesbians of color in a demonstration protesting the law that bans the headscarf. About 200 Franco-French feminists were present in the auditorium. Many are women I've known for 20 years. With very few exceptions, they all went up into a great roar. One questioned the very possibility of veiled *lesbian* subjects. Many others denounced the veiled lesbians as "collaborators" with Muslim men. What a barrage of emotion! It got very out of hand. But I was glad about one thing: though there were very few lesbians of color in the room, since there are so few lesbians of color in academia at all, nearly all stood up to respond to the barrage of emotion. And the anti-racist Franco-French lesbians with whom we had all worked over these years also responded. It just demonstrated, though, that this is an issue that's almost impossible to even discuss at this time. There are vastly different grids of intelligibility at work.

Beyond a very valuable handful of Franco-French feminists who actually work on issues of race and class, there is unfortunately at this time an overwhelming Franco-French feminist complicity with the State's civilization mission discourses, its assimilationism, and its claims about gender equality in French society.

But I also think that one aspect of this massive Franco-French feminist obsession with denouncing the headscarf is that it functions to divert their attention away from their *own* collective conditions: continued high rates of domestic and other violence against Franco-French women by Franco-French men; rape; murder; women's lower level jobs and unequal salaries; women's poor representation in government notwithstanding the Parité laws; and the list goes on.

Ticktin: I think that you're right on that, Paola. With the shift back to the civilizing mission and a policy of assimilation, there is no place for difference. The model of universalism, translated into French republicanism, comes to mean that you either conform, or you're excluded, which increasingly not only means you're marginalized, but that you're deported.

Bacchetta: Yes.

Ticktin: What this means on the ground is that the French state is increasingly about policing – both in terms of the performance of Frenchness, such as what one can or cannot wear, but also physically. There are growing numbers of detention centers not only for those seeking to enter the country, but for those who are long-time residents, but who misstep in some way, who dare not to conform. What this means is that difference must either be deported, erased, or else given *exceptional* expression.

Bacchetta: It deals with it also through a kind of museumification, as well - everything from this new Louvre extension on Islamic art.

Ticktin: Yes.

Bacchetta: And it is significant that Sarkozy got elected President. He ran on his past and present anti-immigrant and anti-Islam positions. He played a major role in the demonization of popular Islams in the suburban slums, of associating these with transnational Islams and producing them both as security threats to France. And he has been central to the production and containment of a national-normative "French Islam."

Marshall: Yes, then of course there's a dual process of the secularization of religion, and the creation of a religious form of secularism, in keeping with the longstanding French tradition, as we all know. Which can't work. Ultimately it just reinforces the powerful 'world-creating' dimension of religion, as well as its political force as a form of dissension, which is what makes it so attractive to particular categories within France but also elsewhere.
Also, in France, we're not looking at the most excluded or marginal populations: the individuals who are invested in the radical and violent forms of Islam are very often precisely those who would have been or who have been the most capable of assimilating or integrating.

Bacchetta: Yes, the point is that Sarkozy has been central to making Islam compatible with the latest version of Franco-French republicanism, capitalism and neo-liberal notions of French identity. It started before him though. The Paris Mosque was created in 1926 to commemorate colonial Maghrebian Muslim subjects who died in WWI fighting on France's side.
But Sarkozy has been involved in everything recent. After 1989, the Interior Minister Pierre Joxe created the Working Council on Islam in France, which Sarkozy supported. He handpicked six Imams for it. He worked with [Charles] Pasqua to establish the Advisory Council of French Muslims to fix the dates of Islamic rituals and regulate practices of "French Islam." This was a homogenization and ordering effort. It was opposed by numerous Islamic organizations including FNMF (National Federation of French Muslims) and OUIF (Union of Islamic Organizations of France); they created their own High Council of French Muslims.
In 2003, that is, after 9/11, Sarkozy himself created CFCM (French Council of the Muslim Faith) as part of his war on terrorism. He told the press he wanted to create "an official Islam in France" to combat "the Islam of cellars and garages," a statement that directly linked Islam in suburban slums to terrorism.

Then, most recently, in 2007 there is, under Sarkozy's presidency, the creation of the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development. It combines immigration policy, labor issues, assimilation measures, and co-operation with postcolonial states on questions of immigration. It's been denounced by every major anti-racism organization in France.

I have been thinking about the whole notion of secularism vs. *laïcité*. Even the most careful scholars writing in English broadly about "secularism" tend to collapse a whole range of relationships between the State, society and religions (in the plural) under the rubric of "secularism," including French *laïcité*. In this work, there are often gross generalizations about Christianity in the West/North, which gets homogenized, and about the relationship between religion and politics in the West/North. I think this is an error. It would be useful to do the work of contextualization in more detail. The historical formation of *laïcité* in France is not the same as secularism in say, Britain or the U.S., and even these two secularisms come out of different forms of Christianity, as well as social and political contexts and desires.

But anyway, *laïcité*, too, is very specific. It was not elaborated in relation to Protestantism but rather Catholicism. This difference matters a lot. *Laïcité* literally signifies "layness" or lay people in the Catholic Church as opposed to its clergy. *Laïcité* is deeply entwined with French Catholicism, even if in opposition.

From its inception *laïcité* in France had at least two different meanings: one was about the *separation* between the Catholic Church and the State, and the other about the *neutrality* of the State in relation to religions. The concept of separation is inscribed in the juridical, in the law of 1905. The concept of state neutrality is inscribed in the Constitutions of 1946 and 1958. These two different conceptions can have vastly different consequences.

It's important to recall this formation as we discuss the politics of *laïcité*. In the re-formulation of *laïcité* historically, there are genealogical claims that are always based on one or the other of these two conceptions, that is, on separation or on state neutrality. The pre-1989 notion of the headscarf drew on the concept of state neutrality towards all religions. The post-1989 debates on the Islamic headscarf evoke the 1905 law, that is, on separation.

Marshall: If you look at the almost hysterical attitudes that certain public intellectuals - the editors of *Marianne* for example - have with respect to religion, whether it be Islam or Catholicism or Judaism, you can see that there's a quasi-religious aspect to French laïcité or secularism.

Bacchetta: Yes, I think that's true.

Marshall: There's a great anxiety on the part of the French, and its expressed terms of the integrity of the nation-state and safeguarding the French exception. France is exceptional in the west, and it's not just exceptional with respect to Africa. There are political effects of this exceptional attitude to religious forms of expression. And although there's more to it than this, one of the reasons you have the rise of political Islam in France is because there are no other forms of political expression available to the populations in these spaces – and that's clearly related to the failure of the Left writ large to incorporate these voices. It's a bit reductionist, perhaps, but nonetheless, if there is no space for acollective political voice of a secular kind, then one is going to see these other forms filling the void.

Bacchetta: Again, the way religion is made hyper-visual or erased, and how its place gets interpreted, is totally situated in relations of power. For example, let's think about the U.S. It has a President, Bush, who imagines himself as Pastor-in-Chief. He's put forth a faith-based domestic and foreign policy. Ashcroft gives Bible lessons in the White House. If this were happening in a so-called "Third World" state it would be called a theocracy. Yet, the U.S. does not get denounced by France or other states as non-secular.

But then in France, many historians have argued that during the French Revolution the revolutionary attacks on the Catholic Church did not have the effect of making French society *laïque*. Historians, for example Mona Ozouf, speak about a transference of sacrality from Catholicism to the new "civic religion." Ozouf argues that in this shift Catholic time was left in place but re-assigned a civic meaning. Catholic festivals too remained intact; but they were re-signified to align with revolutionary events and were spatially displaced out of the Church and into public buildings and the streets.

And of course, many scholars have argued that *laïcité* (and elsewhere secularism) operates like religion and has similar passions attached to it. In this view they're parallel. But I think we also need to

remember another aspect: *laïcité* has its own distinct genealogy, and in it, the form of Catholicism that has dominated in France has a central place.

Marshall: Yes, I think that's true, and yet there have been recent debates around this on a more philosophical level, debates which are nonetheless pretty hermetic to those who are not intellectuals or philosophers. There's a particular notion of history that is constantly being reactualized through the French state and through notions of time and progress that we intellectually cannot seem to get past. And while there has been a revitalization of thinkers such as [Walter] Benjamin and [Franz] Rosenzweig, a renewed concern for political theology, and approaches offering an understanding of history which is radically different, this doesn't seem to be taking beyond this limited intellectual circle. We're still stuck within this Hegelian notion of Reason in history, and the ability of groups to participate or not in this particular type of universal.

And we haven't been able to formulate alternatives on a theoretical or philosophical level, to illuminate that which the Enlightenment left in the shadows. Jean-Luc Nancy's recent book takes up these issues, in the face of what he calls the dangers of a hyperreligious uprising.   So despite the French impasse on these issues, in such philosophical or theoretical discussions, with the return to this old category of the theological/political and a renewed concern with ethics, religion isn't just mere ideology, or a manner of speaking anymore.

Bacchetta: We have to rethink how we think about the theological-political, the question of ethics, of grids of intelligibility, of ways of knowing, together.

I think, on the one hand, of Sarkozy's book and how he declares his acceptance of what he considers to be "new age religions" after meeting Tom Cruise and hearing about scientology - and all of this while he is busy burying Islam. His "openness" is positioned in relations of power. It doesn't comfort me very much.

On the other hand, I also think about the fact that in many sites across the globe, the highly positioned, liberal notions of "emancipation" or "liberation" that continue to pass as neutral and universal in Northern/Western dominant discourses right and left, have long been totally irrelevant, inoperable, and have been bypassed outside the North/West, and even in some spaces within. There are also sites where, insofar as these dominant notions have been imposed, they have been and are being interrogated. But this has yet to have an impact, or even to be heard, in most of the dominant West/North.

This rendering irrelevant, bypassing, even critiquing dominant notions of "emancipation" or "liberation" that otherwise pass for neutral, can come out of a different theological-political grid of intelligibility, wherein the dominant notions in question simply have no salience. But the dominant notions can also be considered irrelevant from elsewhere. That is, theological-political difference might not be the only place from which to make such a critique, or from which to elaborate something else. Theological-political difference can probably provide an interesting opening, but it is not necessarily the only opening possible.

Ticktin: What you're saying, Paola, is very compelling; that is, that there are many other discourses and practices of emancipation that we cannot even see, including those that understand people to be believers and liberated at the same time. What I think is interesting about recognizing the theological-political in the West/North is that it allows the category of the "suffering Other" to be resurrected; this was a category that informed many a colonial intervention. So, on the one hand, we can see the theological-political as a site of critique, an elaboration of a different model of emancipation; on the other hand, it is interesting to see how it just allows for new forms of domination, and a new set of moralisms. Saving the suffering Other is both very French and *laïc*, yet it also draws on a long Catholic tradition that is once again being recognized and reworked in humanitarian missions. That is, a tradition that values martyrdom, that validates suffering, and that postulates a benevolent savior. The question is: who gets to play this savior?

Marshall: Absolutely. We've talked a lot about France. The United States has clearly a very different history, and a very different political context. But it does appear that the same sorts of questions are being asked, or at least, that in international intellectual circles we've moved beyond the old Marxist discourses, and are taking religion seriously.

Ticktin: Yes.

Marshall: The question obviously becomes how can one re-problematize religion? How do we take religion seriously as a form of critique of the political in our time? This would be one of the questions being discussed in France in different circles.   But I wonder if we could turn to the American situation, given this new sort of politics of mission and crusade. Obviously, it's a very different political history where one could say that the religious or political theology has always been at the heart of American notions of political destiny and nationhood.

But how does this play out with respect to a politics of immigration and difference? Obviously the question of religion and immigration is not so central in the States; the main populations being dealt with don't challenge, perhaps, existent understandings of what the Christian nation is. But are there other critical voices coming out? And what are the connections made between the whole discourse on terror and violence, and these more theological/political questions?

Bacchetta: It's complex. I'll give you just one example. Ashcroft, an extreme right-wing Christian, took a public stand against the French law banning the veil even as he and the rest of the Bush regime were busy homogenizing and demonizing Islam.

Marshall: Right.

Bacchetta: It's extremely complex in the U.S. context.

Ticktin: Yes, absolutely.

Marshall: The French example is an interesting case because it does tie in all these questions of violence, sovereignty, terrorism, the law to the whole historical destiny of a nation which aspires to a particular sense of the universal, the revolutionary state, etc.

Bacchetta: Except that it's also a shifting concept, a historically unstable concept, of universalism.

SHIFTING BORDERS AND CONNECTIVITIES IN A TRANSNATIONAL WORLD

Marshall: Absolutely. But we should also pay attention to the ways in which there have been these ongoing connections and the ongoing creation of the modern French state through the other. There's been a series of interesting books on the relationship between the French republic and its African extensions.

Bacchetta: Yes, I know.

Marshall: This relationship of mutual constitution was more central for France than could be perhaps said of the British, or at least, it occurs in a very different way. The whole paradox between assimilated and the indigene, the citizen and the subject, etc. If you look at the way in which these political debates are played out, the problem of French internal affairs and the problem of Africa continue to be intimately linked.   It's telling that before Sarkozy became President of the Republic, as Minister of the Interior he made several visits to African states, to discuss with their Presidents the problems of immigration. Now where else would that ever happen, that a Minister of the Interior would be the envoy of a state to discuss problems of sovereignty and citizenship with another country's President? Why isn't the Minister of Foreign Affairs doing this job?

And it is quite significant and quite exceptional. And it does crystallize, it seems to me, in a very specific and interesting fashion, many of these broader questions: problems of immigration, the other, questions of belonging, citizenship. Because from my African standpoint, we're obviously drawn into these debates all the time, and I can't remain indifferent to French internal politics and how my militia fighters in the village in Western Côte d'Ivoire are reading what's going on in the French *banlieues* and are able to integrate the sense of a space where they feel they have the right or power to intervene, or that they should have, and that's partly what they're fighting for.

I'm not versed in it, but it seems to me the immigration question in North America is played out in quite different terms, despite the fact that many of the problems, everywhere, are related to neo-liberal economies and problems of controlled populations, terrorism and this whole security obsession.

Ticktin: Yes, Ruth, it's revealing that Sarkozy went to several African states in his role as Minister of the Interior, in the place of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as if those African states were still French colonies, and part of the French empire. And yet, it's important to place that alongside the elaboration of a different understanding of political space; I'm speaking of the European Union's sponsorship of camps in places like Libya and Morocco, to stop sub-Saharan Africans from making their way into Europe. This is fast becoming, at least informally, European policy, not only the externalization of asylum, but the making of North African states into the policemen for European borders. So, on the one hand, we have Sarkozy acting as if the French empire is intact, and on the other, there are clear efforts to demarcate Europe from Africa. This is not just about marking different forms of national or regional belonging; being deported from camps into the desert, which has happened in Libya, Algeria and Morocco, could mean being sent to one's death. We might think about this as establishing a border between what [Étienne] Balibar calls "life zones" and "death zones" – not just between geographical regions called Europe and Africa.

Marshall: The camp as the trope of the modern: in Africa, the space of the camp has become, in the last 15 or 20 years, a new and salient political space. And it's not simply with respect to questions of immigration or with respect to the west, but also war and humanitarian crises and forms of migration, which are related to internal crises. But it also poses the question of what to do with the effacement of various boundaries and what has been called private indirect government, where neoliberalism and process of privatization have created all these alternate governmental spaces, and where borders themselves are liminal political spaces where various forms of traffic and negotiations take place, of bodies and goods and so on. Many central political struggles are occurring in and around the margins, in these liminal spaces, reconfiguring the geo-politics of entire regions.

Processes of privatization go hand in hand with a state politics of predation. It's almost like the colonial period, with its concessionary companies, where you've got forms of private enterprise now performing functions of government pretty much everywhere. If you look at Nigeria, for example, in the Delta, well, the government is directly implicated in these various militia groups that are kidnapping oil workers and making it impossible for companies to extract oil and continue to function properly. It's part of a local politics of predation, and the discharge of the sovereign power to kill, onto these groups. Of course, it's more complex than that, but nonetheless, it appears to be a form of politics, which has, from the point of view of classical theories of the state, an almost suicidal logic. Mbembe has argued that it constitutes a form of necro-politics. I'm not entirely convinced by that. But despite its colonial echoes, it does seem to me that there is something quite novel in this, and t it raises the question of sovereignty in a new and urgent fashion. And you see it also, with respect to international interventions, not only through the World Bank and the IMF, new international juridical regimes, but through the creation of new political fields and spaces in post-war contexts, or these transnational political spaces of the camp mediated through international humanitarian organizations, as well as the privatization of military training. If you look at the American interventions in Africa, they are almost fully privatized.

Bacchetta: Not fully privatized, but there is increased privatization of the functions of the State.

Marshall: However, all this talk of "failed" states is so much polemics. We are not looking at the effacement of the state. It's a transformation of the state.

Bacchetta: Yes, through its atomization and privatization. Also, its transnational links; its modalities of transnational cooperation.

This process has many aspects. The transnational connectivity evokes both an opening and a closure. Remember the crisis of the European referendum? Just barely over 50% of the French were in favor of France being part of the European Union. And I don't think it's by chance that the extremes of increased transnational connectivity and the enfolding of France into itself (against Europe) happened so acutely at the same time that the State's immigration policy was about assimilationism (thus against cultural difference). The notion that the "outside" poses some kind of threat underlies both of these phenomena: the lack of enthusiasm for and almost rejection of Europe, the outright rejection of immigrant

difference. These are two differently weighted "outsides" of course, but the idea of a threat appears in the relation to each.

Another side to transnational connectivity is its enabling place in critical social movements. Today nearly all critical social movements are linked to similar movements across borders. The same is true for cultural productions, for example, francophone Rap and Hip Hop - the way these travel.

Marshall: Yes, Gangsta Rap for example - this is true of my militia guys. These kids, while many of them are urban and others are rural, they're all completely plugged into the global youth culture and see themselves as a cosmopolitan vanguard. And even though they may be defending extremely local forms of practice, defenders of a small parcel of land, if you like, on the other hand, their whole vision is directed outward onto these open global vistas. And the ways in which they position themselves and imagine themselves in the future, are all about the outside and relations they may have with others who are at home in these worlds, while at the same time, being proponents of this extremely exclusive xenophobic discourse. And it's extremely paradoxical and it's something very difficult to unpack. The liminality of these social groups, the ways in which they are searching for places and modes of self-definition within imaginaries, which are increasingly global and transnational. This is true, of course, of the most successful religious movements as well. No matter how localized or small the group, there is still a quest to integrate various global elements, even if it's just on a symbolic level.

Bacchetta: This reminds me of Neil Smith's notion of social movements "jumping scales" in resistance. That is, movements are empowered as they produce themselves at larger scales.

The kind of transnational connectivity that you describe among the youth in Ivory Coast, Ruth, is also happening among people of color movements in France. For example, the "6 November Group: Lesbians out of Colonialism, Slavery and Immigration," located in Paris, had connections globally and worked on a daily basis with these connections. In Paris, the Group organized exhibits of the work of an Italian lesbian of color artist, [???] Verushka, who is of mixed Italian and Ethiopian origin, and films by an African-American lesbian of color filmmaker. The Group had an enormous presence on the internet, too. It became a network linking francophone lesbians of color in France and Europe, across Africa, all over really.

Also, there has been much selection of elements from transnational flows. For example, some lesbian of color groups in France have configured the term *WASPiennes de France* (WASP women of France) to designate mainly Franco-French lesbians and feminists who refuse to deal with racism. The term WASP comes to France certainly because of the power of the U.S. in transnational flows. But then the term WASP gets selected by lesbians of color in France out of solidarity with U.S. lesbians and women of color.

We might think the term WASP is so specific to the U.S. that it can't mean anything in France. It designates a dominant sector in the U.S., and one that's completely differently composed from the dominant sector in France. But, brought into France and reconfigured, the term WASP is no longer about White Anglo-Saxon-Protestant. Instead, in France it's a bit about a dominantly racialized, nationalized positionality but it's *especially about a political stance* (that is, a subject's refusal to even recognize the existence of racism). In France the term becomes devoid of essentialism. For example, Franco-French lesbians committed to anti-racism, such as those in the group LDR (Lesbians against Discrimination and Racism) which is based in Paris, would never be called *WASPiennes de France* even if most are positioned in the dominant sector in France. This is because the LDR members not only recognize racism, but are totally committed to ending it. In contrast, it is not impossible that some women of color who take the position that there's no racism in France might get called *WASPiennes de France*. So the term is not used in an essentialist way. It's not about an always already fixed correlation between bodies, positionalities and political engagements. It's also not used in a communitarian way, that is, to include or exclude on the basis of characteristics over which one has no control. It's about political stances mainly. The point is that in France the term gets re-signified contextually.

Marshall: It does and it doesn't. I mean, it does, but it gets re-signified in terms of its coming from elsewhere. And what it carries is this external link that it also enables and which is enabling in turn. There is this re-appropriation of global forms or styles or symbols into the local discourse and they signify something completely different. But I think it's a mistake to imagine that they become entirely "localized." While a definition of the local was central to colonial strategy (fixing and determining the contours of

spaces and who can be in them and under what circumstances), what's interesting about many of these youth movements is that while they are defending very localized forms of identity and belonging, they really aren't about policies of locality or about policies of fixing or closure; but an opening, an opening towards other possibilities, be they symbolic or material. And this is how it fits into this whole problem of immobility, which is captured by the question of immigration. Because inasmuch as these kids, and some of them are just children, these young people, are determined to foster national and local pride and even redefine the internal political geography of the nation-state and exclude a large section of its population from citizenship and enjoying a certain life, what they are really after is belonging to a much broader community, the global community, to have the right to be mobile and move among and between worlds.

They wantthe ability to go to France, and to be able to speak on their own terms and be heard and not feel that they are second-class citizens. It's very hard to get over the negative aspects of it, the exclusion and the violence and the terms in which the local other is designated. But I think there is more to it than that. It is about a certain type of emancipation, however ambiguous and however distorted it might be.

Bacchetta: The local and the global - it usually gets posited as a binary. But I think that we're not talking about it in that way.

Marshall: Absolutely.

Bacchetta: To think of the world, and of all sites at whatever scales, in terms of transnational connectivities is also a way of displacing the local vs. global binary.

Marshall: Yes, these places have no place.

Bacchetta: All that also, sure. And we have to remain very conscious of the kinds of conditions and deployments of spatialities that we're talking about.
So, there are the State strategies of spatialization, the ghettoization of bodies of color in suburban slums and specific inner city neighborhoods. These spaces are the object of police surveillance, social worker interventions, etc. It's about what Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls the racialization of space and spatialization of race.
There's also the spatialization of resistance. The 1981 legalization of immigrant associations was a way to get non-citizen groups to register with the government. It was a means to pin down andlocate the sites of resistance. Interestingly, the Feminist Collective against Racism and Anti-Semitism, the 6 November Group, and all other lesbian of color groups have never registered with the State. In groups I was in we discussed it, analyzed it and said: "no way." Many groups do register with the state only because it makes them eligible to apply for state funding. But we always thought, well, it just wasn't worth it.
There are also State attempts to uproot and re-spatialize Islam in France. They worked to get rid of what Sarkozy called the "Islam of the cellars and garages." They wanted Islam to be out in full view of the French State where it could be better controlled. That's why they created these new spaces and so-called "representative" councils.
And on the other hand, of course, resistance movements have brilliantly deployed space. Just think of how the 2005 suburban slums revolts disrupted the State's orderly racialized spatialization.

Marshall: This whole game of binary representations has been, and is predominantly, a political game. And it's interesting to see how these forms of representation, which have been a central part of state techniques and practices, have been turned on their head, or at least given new significations.
Because at the same time, as we've been saying, there is no locality. What is interesting is to see what sorts of forces are involved in the process of localization and legislation, or forms of regulation that constrain people's actions. And I'm thinking of my young patriots who tried to create municipal bylaws in some villages so that immigrants would have to live in certain quarters. For example, local and indigenous youth could not share rooms with immigrant youth. There could be no sexual commerce between immigrants and locals, etc. And that space is bodily, but also physical in terms of the space of the city - hat immigrants/migrants would have to clean the drains, and could not undertake certain types of economic activities. There could be no building of mosques, for example.

This sort of construction of local in terms of occupation of space and movement, etc., is very much part of political strategies which themselves are not actually engaged with the local, in the sense that they represent it to themselves and it shows the ambivalence of the term "locality." And it also shows that these sorts of strategies, which seem very much tied to state law, are not necessarily part of an overarching strategic, state-driven program, but also participate in other forms of struggles, or in many respects, against state techniques and forms of power.

Bacchetta: Absolutely. I think Foucault makes a lot of sense when he points out that by understanding resistance we can better understand power. Resistance will take up and reproduce many elements of power, and there is a relationship of inseparability between the two.

Which brings us back to what we talked about earlier, that is, subjects produced under conditions of colonialism, slavery and immigration. What kinds of possibilities are there for opening that situation, those conditions, up?