ABSTRACT

Neo-traditionalism was a classicist and colonialist project for regenerating the nation, inaugurated by French avant-garde intellectuals in the fin-de-siècle. Most were formerly Symbolists. They wanted to regenerate a dissolute French population employing new fantasies of identity which would overcome the fragmentation of French culture in the era of modern imperialism. The neo-traditionalist world-view was an alchemy of conflicting cultural concerns which defined the era. These intellectuals hoped that, according to their specific rearrangement of these concerns, they would redefine and regenerate France itself. Neo-traditionalism was an aesthetic-political project which was conservative and revolutionary, colonial and metropolitan, traditional and avant-garde.

This dissertation is a history of this specific set of ideas and strategies which occupies an uneasy position at the intersection of several conventional historical topics: modernism, fascism, and colonialism. Neo-traditionalism was none of these per se, and yet touched upon all of these topics. This is not a history of France quarantined from its overseas territories, but a history of France that includes colonial Algeria as it was seen by most French contemporaries: an integral and legal part of territorial France. This study also focuses on the lives of two neo-traditionalist intellectuals, Louis Bertrand and Albert Camus, whose works helped define and redefine these shared ideas over time, as they moved across the colonial threshold between France and Algeria, and as they sought to
redefine each society in the image of the other. Bertrand was the founder, almost *sui generis*, of the conventions of settler literature in the colony. He was also one of the most pro-Nazi French intellectual s of the twentieth century. Camus still remains the most celebrated writer of that settler literature, as well as being almost equally as certain the most famous anti-fascist French intellectual of the twentieth century. There is much that distinguishes their lives and work from one another, but there is also a great deal that they share. One was fascist, the other was anti-fascist. But they shared particular visions of society that are only understood in exploring the intellectual subcultures which shaped their world-view on either side of the Mediterranean: a neo-traditionalist world-view.
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Finally, Harold Mah has been a real inspiration. My interest in Algerian and French history was first provoked in his graduate seminar. This dissertation, as should be obvious, derives many of its approaches and techniques from his inimitable style of cultural history. I cannot write as clearly or elegantly, but I regard his essays and books, with a very few others, as beacons out of the obscurity of my own half-finished thoughts.
This dissertation is dedicated to Hazel MacKenzie and Robert Tittler.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Neo-Traditionalism: Classicism, Colonialism and the Occulted Origins of French Modernity.

“The intensity and perseverance of the neo-classical movement is one of the two or three most remarkable phenomena of the Belle Époque. Yet it is also one of the most forgotten, and one of the least comprehensible, for the reading public today.”
-Bonner Mitchell, *Les Manifestes Littéraires de la Belle Époque*

“Bertrand’s image of the classical renaissance was a tree with its roots digging as deep as its branches could spread. Like Maurras (or Barrès), he imagined the artist as bearer of the collective memories and ideals of his race.”
-Margaret Werth, *The Joy of Life: The Idyllic in French Art, Circa 1900*

In fin-de-siècle France a cultural project for regenerating the nation was inaugurated by avant-garde intellectuals. They, like many of their generation, were concerned with the nation’s decadence and seeming decline. This is the history of an influential group of neo-classicist modernists who sought, by virtue of their art, to re-root French people into authentic traditions they thought had been obliterated by the disorientation, dislocation, and decadence of modernity. This project went by different names according to several movements, yet an affinity and shared world-view was nonetheless acknowledged between them. Maurice Denis called this world-view ‘neo-traditionalism’. Gabriel Hanotaux and others called it a *renaissance latine*. Saint-Georges de Bouhélier, Alfred de Tarde and Henri Massis called it a *renaissance française*. Still others like Charles Maurras
called it a *renaissance classique* or the doctrine of *traditionalisme*. Members of a number of avant-garde movements, including the Symbolists, the École Romane and the Naturistes, began defining themselves as neo-classicist in aesthetic sensibility, nationalist in politics, and with an emphasis on the Mediterranean as the privileged site for both France’s classical and colonial self-definition.

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1 A note on terminology: neo-traditionalism is used to describe not a single movement, but a palpable shift in avant-garde movements in the 1890s, in which many expressed an increasingly ‘revanchiste’ preoccupation with tradition, classicism and conquest. According to Alphonse Roche in 1937: “The use of the term traditionalism […] did not become current in literary criticism until the last thirty years. We find it used by Henry Bérenger in an article in 1897, by Maurras in 1900, and by Bourget in 1901. But it is not until 1904 and 1914 that ‘traditionalism’ and ‘traditionalist’, in the political, social and literary sense, became more broadly used. Critics like Albert Thibaudet, Victor Giraud and many others have often discussed this issue and used this term. We find it in many manuals of literary history published since the war.” Alphonse Roche, “Les Idées Traditionalistes en France de Rivarol à Charles Maurras,” in *Illinois Studies in Language and Literature*, Vol. 21 (The University of Illinois at Urbana, 1937), p. 13. The works of Agathon (nom de plume of a young Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde) examined the fin-de-siècle ‘generation’ of French students who championed tradition, action, and classicism against the decadent society around them, in the universities and cities. See Agathon, *Les Jeunes gens d’aujourd’hui* (1913); and Agathon, *L’Esprit de la nouvelle Sorbonne* (1911); See also Pierre Lasserre, *Le Romantisme français* (Mercure de France, 1907). Massis, Tarde and Lasserre were intellectuals writing nearer the First World War than 1890, by which time many of the neo-classicists of the 1890s had been drawn into the orbit of Charles Maurras, but there were many permutations of these themes in the 1890s, and expressed in many movements. But because of Maurras’s extraordinary success in redefining French neo-classicism, by the early twentieth century many if not most had been absorbed into the Action Française fold. Thus studies of this period tend to downplay the variety of neo-classicist nationalist movements vying for an avant-garde readership in the 1890s—of which Moréas’s and Maurras’s post-Symbolist École Romane was only one albeit an influential one. Denis’s slightly earlier use of *néo-traditionnisme* to describe a simultaneously classicist and Orientalist reaction within Symbolism (and which in his case had led him to the Nabis group of decorative if otherwise disparate Parisian painters including Abel Bonnard) precedes the popularization of ‘traditionalism’ (as noted by Roche) by a decade—and which Denis discussed in *Art et Critique* in 1890. See Maurice Denis, *Théories, 1890-1910. Du Symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique* (1920), p.1, *passim*. My emphasis of the term ‘neo-traditionalism’, rather than some of the other terms in use at the time like *renaissance classique* (by which this shared aesthetic-political project was also named) is not only because Denis’s definition of neo-traditionalism has many affinities with other Symbolist and post-Symbolist movements studied here (and not just among the Nabis or the École Romane for example), but particularly because this term, which he used to describe his generation’s repudiation of Naturalism, best expresses the Janus-faced nature of the broader classicist/colonialist, modernist/traditionalist cultural project shared among the several post-Symbolist movements and dozens of intellectuals which this dissertation examines, and as well as being far less confusing and vague to use in retrospect than other contemporary candidates such as ‘classicism’ or ‘traditionalism’. 
Whatever its precise permutations as elaborated in the works of different neo-classicist avant-garde movements, it was a surprisingly consistent set of shared aesthetic and political priorities. That there was a nationalist and neo-classicist turn in the 1890s avant-garde was evident to intellectuals of these movements and continued to be elaborated over much of the course of the Third Republic. It was a project and a world-view shared among a specific subculture of avant-garde intellectuals, most of them formerly Symbolists, who wanted to regenerate a dissolute French population employing new fantasies of identity which would overcome the fragmentation of fin-de-siècle French culture in the era of modern imperialism. The neo-traditionalist world-view was an alchemy of conflicting cultural concerns which defined the era. These intellectuals hoped that, according to their specific re-arrangement of these concerns, and through their works of art and criticism, they would redefine and regenerate France itself.

Neo-traditionalism was an aesthetic-political project which was conservative and revolutionary, colonial and metropolitan, traditional and avant-garde. In particular, neo-traditionalists sought to regenerate a decadent French modernity by simultaneously employing strategies for the imitation of classical sources and the mimicry of colonial subjects; each comprised an aesthetic-political strategy for recovering France’s waning power and glory. If French modernity was perceived to be effete and decadent, the solution was to turn to
the primitive sources of French classicism and the savage sources of Orientalized fantasies, blended as one into a regenerated modern French subject.

This is the history of a world-view which developed among a set of avant-garde intellectuals in the fin-de-siècle and a history of the strange trajectories of this world-view over the course of the twentieth century. It is the history of a set of avant-garde intellectuals who are rarely studied together—Maurice Barrès, Albert Camus, Rabah Zenati, Charles Maurras, Maurice Denis, André Gide—to name only a few. Some of these intellectuals have not been fully appreciated in terms of their ideas on classicism; some have not been appreciated in terms of their ideas on colonialism. However, this set of intellectuals, crisscrossing Greater France and the colonial Mediterranean, as their own texts crisscrossed each other’s in filiation, fashioned a distinct vision of France’s cultural past and future. Theirs was a cultural modernity they modeled upon intertwined classicist and colonialist visions. To tell the story of this world-view means journeying from 1890s Paris and Provence to 1930s Algiers and back, as we follow the itinerary of several of these intellectuals, the groups they formed, and their ideas.

**Neo-Traditionalism as a Key to the Works of Louis Bertrand and Albert Camus**

This study not only surveys the lives and works of French neo-traditionalists in the colonial Mediterranean, but also closely examines the writings of two neo-traditionalist intellectuals in particular, Louis Bertrand and
Albert Camus. Understanding Bertrand and Camus through the lens of neo-traditionalism illuminates crucial lacunae in their work, and it also reveals the importance of several concepts and intellectual filiations which have until now been almost completely passed over by scholars. Their writings helped define and redefine France and Algeria through neo-traditionalist aesthetic and political strategies. They did so as they moved across the colonial threshold between France and Algeria and as they sought to redefine each society in the image of the other. Neo-traditionalists were not unanimously concerned with colonial Algeria in particular (although many in fact were, or came to be, over the course of the twentieth century). Yet colonial Algeria was one of the principal parts of France in which the neo-traditionalist ideas were most profoundly developed in the twentieth century, and along with Paris and Provence, provides a key site for investigating this cultural phenomenon. The influence of neo-traditionalist ideas in Algeria was in part due to the links Louis Bertrand had to fin-de-siècle avant-garde movements as well as his position in Algerian society. It also had to do with the ways in which neo-traditionalist fantasies fit with, or masked, social realities there. This is not a history of France quarantined from its overseas territories. This is a history of France that includes colonial Algeria as it was seen by most French contemporaries: an integral and legal part of territorial France, and a privileged site for redefining Frenchness itself.
Bertrand was the founder, almost *sui generis*, of the conventions of settler literature in the colony. He was also one of the most pro-Nazi French intellectuals of the twentieth century. Camus still remains the most celebrated writer of that settler literature, as well as being almost equally certain the most famous anti-fascist French intellectual of the twentieth century. There is much that distinguishes their lives and work from one another, but there is also a great deal that they share. One was fascist, the other was anti-fascist. But they shared particular visions of society that are only understood in exploring the intellectual subcultures which shaped their world-view on either side of the Mediterranean: a neo-traditionalist world-view. Bertrand and Camus, like Maurice Barrès, Charles Maurras, Isabelle Eberhardt or André Gide, were travelling the routes of French imperialism and Mediterranean tourism as they fashioned themselves as artists, and simultaneously fashioned their art as a means for social regeneration.

Louis Bertrand (1866-1941) was a noted classicist, Symbolist, Realist, Catholic conservative, essayist, novelist, colonial propagandist, fascist, correspondent for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and member of the Académie Française.² Stephen Wilson’s assessment of Bertrand’s legacy is a good starting point for understanding this strange intellectual odyssey:

Louis Bertrand is significant not only and perhaps not primarily as an example of a writer who moved from traditional right-wing attitudes to Fascism, skirting the Action Française en route, but because through his novels, his historical works, and his books on Africa, he gave French nationalism a new direction and a new dimension. The purely Action Française writers had moved away rather cautiously from the old right-wing view that France’s colonial Empire was a diversion from the Vosges to a celebration of a heroic creation won despite the Republic; but Louis Bertrand was the first to put the emphasis of his nationalism on the Empire. Africa he asserted was the real theatre of ‘l’action française’; he never forgot Lorraine, but in fact North Africa became his Lorraine, and he pointed the way to ‘l’Algérie Française’ and all that went with it.\(^3\)

His history, quarantined to metropolitan France or colonial Algeria, or in the historiography of the far-right or French imperialism, does not capture the complex itineraries of this intellectual—his was a Mediterranean modernity that can only be realized by understanding neo-traditionalism itself. Situated in the avant-garde context in which he emerged, his vision of French regeneration in the colonies was anything but unique. Instead it was patterned on the colonialist/classicist concerns developed among his fellow neo-traditionalists who were also seeking to redefine French tradition in a colonial modernity.

Albert Camus (1913-1960) has been remembered as an Algerian settler intellectual, novelist, essayist, Resistance propagandist, Existentialist philosopher, dramatist of the Absurd, liberal, socialist, anarchist, actor, and/or Parisian intellectual. Bertrand was born in France but is remembered primarily for his presence in Algerian settler culture. Camus was born in Algeria but is remembered primarily for his presence in French intellectual culture. David Carroll suggests, “In Camus’s terms, the Algerian in Camus is a Mediterranean: neither strictly French nor Algerian, neither European nor African, but both at the same time.”

Camus’s intellectual filiations have been located in France as well as Algeria. Much more rarely is he defined as he himself often did, not only as French or Algerian, but according to these specific intellectual filiations—filiations which lead to a neo-traditionalist origin. Bertrand and Camus each travelled separately across France, Algeria, Spain, Italy, Greece and Egypt as they elaborated a Mediterranean identity. This identity, as we shall see, was manufactured by

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mimicking classicist and Orientalist French fantasies focused upon a French Mediterranean. They melded these fantasies into their regenerative vision for a modern France. It is along these routes of French imperialism that this study traces the hidden roots of French nationalism and settler colonialism, linked by a shared set of aesthetic-political avant-garde ideas and values.⁶

**Neo-Traditionalism at the Crossroads: Historiographies of Modernism, Fascism and Colonialism.**

The history of neo-traditionalism exists at the border of several existing historiographies. It is a set of ideas that historians of modernism have often identified, correctly but in a more limited fashion, as part of the neo-classical revival and aesthetic reaction of the 1890s. It is a set of ideas that historians of fascism have often examined, sometimes productively but I believe in many cases reductively, as composing the intellectual origins of fascism. And it is a set of ideas that has been identified by historians of colonized Algeria and French colonialism as composing the central myths of settler society in North Africa. It is difficult to see how these ideas all fit together as part of a specific world-view in part because they are seldom treated in the synoptic manner they were by many contemporaries. In other words, this study of neo-traditionalism exists at the

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nexus of historiographical categories which have since developed their own histories and specific concerns. Examining neo-traditionalism as a phenomenon that exists across these boundaries not only helps illuminate neglected aspects of each historiographical category, it also reveals the origin and trajectories of ideas that have come to be so closely aligned with modern notions of French authenticity.

**Neo-Traditionalism and Modernism**

The study of French modernism has steadily moved past the historiographical provincialism that had earlier demarcated it as a singularly Western and/or European phenomenon. Increasingly, and more accurately, modernism is studied as it emerged, diverged and converged in different social contexts, not just across Europe among different groups, but across the globe in this globalizing period of the ‘New Imperialism’. Distinct modernist movements emerged in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, reflecting the different and dynamic social and cultural contexts of Shanghai, Vienna, or Cairo to name a few. This does not mean that Paris—the classic case of modernism—was not an

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7 Max Nordau imagined modernist culture as if it, on the one hand, was symptomatic of a generalized European malady of modernity. On the other hand, Nordau and others presented modernism as if it emanated or erupted from a single space, social group and time in particular. In particular the epicentre of modernism was situated in Paris among the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century. From there it spread ‘outward’. Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, translated from the second edition (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905).

important hub of modernist sub-cultures like the aesthetic avant-garde, themselves linked in different ways to other global modernities and modernist movements. In fact Paris, as a cosmopolitan city at the political and economic center of one of the principal imperial powers of the period is more accurately understood, with its diverse population, as a nexus point of overlapping modernities rather than a singular Modernity.\(^9\)

There is a considerable scholarly literature on the Parisian avant-garde (that is to say modernist aesthetic movements associated with Paris) particularly in the Belle Époque (that is the period between the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War). French modern artists and intellectuals, often self-segregated into evolving movements like the Naturalists, the Symbolists or the École Romane, have been the subject of intense study since their origins in the nineteenth century. This scrutiny has hardly lessened since they took to analyzing themselves as individuals and movements in avant-garde journals, \textit{La
Revue Blanche, La Revue Bleue, and later La Nouvelle Revue Française, or having been analyzed in the works of critical amateur and academic scholars nonetheless often associated in some ways with the avant-garde: in classic studies such as those of Max Nordau, Ferdinand Brunetière, or Maurice Denis.\textsuperscript{10}

The inter-relationship between avant-garde artists and the politics of their era has never been far from studies of modernism. This inter-relationship between culture and politics has been as important in histories of the period as upon the canvas for artists, the stage for dramatists, or the novels for authors in the Belle Époque. In the 1890s a palpable shift was occurring in many new avant-garde movements. Jean Pierrot’s \textit{The Decadent Imagination} examines the profound shifts in avant-garde writings on decadence in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{11} A period of anarchic explorations in the early part of the decade was followed by an intensified nationalism, often framed in terms of a classical revival, by the end.\textsuperscript{12} It is surprising that given its crucial importance, the neo-classicist revival of the fin-de-siècle has received comparatively little interest particularly among English-language scholars writing on the avant-garde. Perhaps this is because neo-classicism is often treated (incorrectly in my view) as a repudiation of modernism; it may also have to do with the fact that French classicism is a vast

\textsuperscript{10} See for example, Nordau, \textit{Degeneration}; Ferdinand Brunetière, \textit{Nouvelles questions de critique} (1890); Maurice Denis, \textit{Théories 1890-1910} (Paris, 1912).
\textsuperscript{12} As noted by David Weir, \textit{Decadence and the Making of Modernism} (University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), p. 155.
field of knowledge and an intricately complex inter-textual structure.\(^{13}\)

Conversely, many French scholars, giants in the field like Alphonse Roche and Henri Peyre, have treated the neo-classicist revival as part of a continuum of French classicism and indeed a relatively static French identity, rather than as a particular aesthetic-political response within modernism. This may have to do with the importance of far-right icons such as Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras in defining contemporary French neo-classicism.\(^{14}\) Roche and Peyre particularly neglect the importance of French Mediterranean imperialism in shaping their Greco-Latin classicist concerns.\(^{15}\)

More recently, the social historian of ideas Christophe Charle and the cultural historian Venita Datta have argued increasingly refined ways to

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\(^{14}\) This dissertation owes much to earlier studies by Alphonse Roche, whose scholarship on French classicism and regionalism is undeservedly neglected today. However, Roche, like Henri Peyre, repeats as much as contextualizes the assumptions fin-de-siècle classicists like Charles Maurras had about the permanence of French classicism and its relationship to French character. Alphonse Roche, “Les Idées Traditionalistes en France de Rivarol à Charles Maurras,” pp. 1-225. Roche’s section on “Les théoriciens du Traditionalisme moderne” remains the best existing survey of neo-traditionalist thought in the fin-de-siècle. *Ibid*, pp.138-154. See also Henri Peyre, *Qu’est-ce que le classicisme?* (1965).

\(^{15}\) A work which closely analyzes Barrès’s imbricated fin-de-siècle classicism and colonialism is Ida-Marie Frandon’s *L’Orient de Maurice Barrès: etude de genèse* (1952). See also the excellent reading by David Carroll in his *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and the Ideology of Culture* (Princeton University Press, 1995).
understand the avant-garde as social movements within an historical context.\textsuperscript{16} Christophe Charle’s exhaustive research on Belle Époque intellectuals was in part inspired by Bourdieu, but aspired to greater empirical rigour in examining the social divisions and unity among avant-garde writers and intellectuals in the Belle Époque. Venita Datta has taken apart the discourses and preoccupations that composed avant-garde intellectuals’ journals—for Datta, Parisian intellectuals on either side of the Dreyfus Affair, whatever their stated politics, in fact shared many political beliefs and assumptions.\textsuperscript{17}

Over time the study of these avant-garde movements and its points of contact with contemporaneous politics has become increasingly decentred from Paris. This better reflects the reality of the intellectuals comprising these movements, who moved beyond Paris with far greater frequency than some scholarship on the avant-garde would lead one to believe. The study of writers and artists in the provinces has produced a much fuller picture of avant-garde movements in general, as well as French politics. Anne-Marie Thiesse’s masterful studies of provincial cultural elites have yet to be surpassed as both a history of


\textsuperscript{17} Datta, \textit{The Birth of a National Icon}. 

French regionalism and of French literature.\textsuperscript{18} Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer’s recent study of Cézanne is another work that helps contextualize him within regionalist aesthetic and political movements—meridional regionalist movements he in fact participated in with Louis Bertrand.\textsuperscript{19} To study the French avant-garde, it is no longer coherent to restrict one’s gaze to Paris alone.

And with greater recent interest in French colonial studies generally, avant-garde literary and artistic movements in the colonies have begun to be examined with greater interest among Anglophone scholars. Azzedine Haddour, David Prochaska and Peter Dunwoodie have each studied the Algérianiste and École d’Alger literary movements of colonial Algeria, to which Bertrand and Camus belonged.\textsuperscript{20} But this is a topic that has interested Francophone scholars for a longer period of time. Jean Déjeux, Rabah Belamri, and Christiane Chaulet-Achour are some of the key scholars who helped delineate these avant-garde and colonial movements.\textsuperscript{21} Art historian Roger Benjamin has studied the important Abd-el-Tif group in colonial Algeria, as well as the works of the Algerian avant-

\textsuperscript{18} Anne-Marie Thiesse, Écrire la France: le mouvement littéraire régionaliste de langue française entre la Belle Époque et la Libération (PUF, 1991); Julian Wright’s The Regionalist Movement in France, 1890-1914 (Clarendon, 2003), seeks to downplay the importance of literary works in the regionalist movements of the Belle Époque.

\textsuperscript{19} Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, Cézanne and Provence: The Painter and his Culture (University of Chicago Press, 2003).

\textsuperscript{20} Haddour, Colonial Myths; David Prochaska, “History as Literature, Literature as History: Cagayous of Algiers,” in The American Historical Review, vol. 101, No. 3 (Jun., 1996); Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria.

\textsuperscript{21} Jean Déjeux, Littérature maghrébine de langue française: introduction générale et auteurs 2e ed. (Sherbrooke: Éditions Naaman, 1978); Belamri, L’Oeuvre de Louis Bertrand; Chaulet-Achour Albert Camus, Alger.
The scholarship of art historians and art critics like Athanassoglou-Kallmyer on French regionalism, or Benjamin on French colonialism, is too often ignored by cultural historians examining these same movements and artists. Like Datta and Charle, Athanassoglou-Kallmyer and Benjamin discuss these avant-garde movements in relation to the political and social circumstances of the era. Bertrand and Camus are best understood not just in this colonial context, but among the metropolitan and regionalist avant-garde as well.

**Neo-Traditionalism and Fascism**

Locating the origins of fascism among late nineteenth-century French intellectuals has also been an object of study for some time that obviously intersects these studies of modernism. Examining intellectuals’ development of fascist doctrines is not an isolated preoccupation among historians, although some scholars have focused specifically on intellectuals themselves as the originators of fascism, particularly intellectuals connected with fin-de-siècle modernism. Some of the most notable scholars examining the nexus of modernism and fascism are Zeev Sternhell, Roger Griffin, David Carroll, Andrew Hewittt and Mark Antliff. Yet questions about the

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intellectual origins of fascist ideas were certainly not inaugurated by these historians and literary scholars.

It should not be surprising that in the 1930s a number of key intellectuals examined the origins of fascist ideas. In *Fascisme et grand capital, Italie-Allemagne* (1936), anarcho-syndicalist Daniel Guérin devoted considerable attention to how Georges Sorel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Oswald Spengler and other intellectuals acted as formative influences on the development of fascism as a doctrine. In 1939 art historian Clement Greenberg explored the distinction between avant-garde and kitsch (the latter a German term this essay popularized in English). In Greenberg’s essay, the distinctions between avant-garde and kitsch are complicated by the recurring referent of fascism which punctuates the entire essay. For such a short essay, Greenberg offers a surprisingly nuanced portrait of fascism’s inter-relationship with modernism—both fascism as a general concept and specific fascist aesthetics. Fascism is on the one hand a puritanical resentment against modern culture, but on the other, like avant-garde art, it is an aestheticized product of the modern age. Greenberg opposes fascism to avant-garde art but also argues that fascism drew upon it—though fascism was removed from avant-garde art by three degrees of simulacra:


fascism drew upon kitsch; and kitsch drew upon “academicized simulacra of genuine culture...”\(^{25}\) Walter Benjamin’s 1936 essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” can hardly be missed in studies of modernist aesthetics. It is certainly one of the most widely-read essays on the subject in the contemporary university. Unlike Greenberg’s essay, Benjamin’s has been acknowledged repeatedly as drawing attention to the aestheticizing component of fascist politics. Most cultural studies of fascism, and there are increasingly many, assume as a starting point Benjamin’s observation that fascism introduces “aesthetics into political life.” Many if not all of the other points of the essay, an essay which mainly concerns the political and social implications of modernist techniques and technologies, are usually dismissed or ignored. Fascism receives little more attention in Benjamin’s essay than in Greenberg’s, but when fascism and modernism are discussed in Benjamin’s essay, to the inattention of cultural historians of fascism, they are explicitly discussed in the context of modern imperialism.

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\(^{25}\) Greenberg disturbs the binary between academic classicism and Romantic creativity (in his essay “academized simulacra” and avant-garde art) by adding an extra point on this aesthetic spectrum. Beyond stale classicism is kitsch. As we will see, this is not far off Louis Bertrand’s earlier assessment of the fate of classicism in his *Le fin du classicisme*. Greenberg thought avant-garde art exemplified authentic contemporary culture, and was at threat by the forces of reaction—the essay was published in the wake of the notorious Nazi *Entartete Kunst* or ‘degenerate art’ exhibition of 1937. Greenberg also notes that the suburbs of Rome were home to more modernist architecture than anywhere in the world, yet fascist-sponsored aesthetics had more recently shifted to an emphasis on a “New imperial style,” relegating avant-garde futurists like Marinetti to the margins. Greenberg shows fascist aesthetics as dynamic and changing, and complicated in both its opposition to, and its drawing from, modernism. Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, second edition (Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds.) (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002).
And yet this unmistakeable component to the essay is quarantined from discussions by cultural historians of fascism, who are more interested in only discussing avant-garde aesthetics and exclusively metropolitan contexts of fascism. But this is not what Benjamin himself was discussing. And of course, many of the most august post-war historians of European history looked to the confluence of modernism and fascism, including George Mosse, Fritz Stern and Carl Schorske.

In terms of the intellectual origins of French fascism specifically, intellectual historian Zeev Sternhell’s work remains vital as an original, and in its specifics quite insightful, intellectual history of this phenomenon.

French fascism was not only found in the organizations and political

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26 Marxist-influenced Benjamin was quite clear that his conception of Fascism’s “introduction of aesthetics into political life” was due to its attempt to shape proletarianized masses without changing property structures. But most relevant here is that after Benjamin makes this statement, he immediately discusses how “all efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing... Only war makes it possible to mobilize all of today’s technical resources while maintaining the property system. It goes without saying that the Fascist apotheosis of war does not employ such arguments.” What fascist arguments does Benjamin find instead? He draws appropriately on Marinetti, but specifically on Marinetti’s “Manifesto on the Ethiopian Colonial War”. After highlighting Marinetti’s joyous celebration of gunfire, tanks, burning villages, and the stench of (colonized African Ethiopian) rotting corpses, Benjamin’s conclusion could not be more explicit in tying Fascism’s avant-garde aestheticization of politics to imperialism (which for Benjamin involves crises in the overproduction of capitalism): The horrible features of imperialistic warfare are attributable to the discrepancy between the tremendous means of production and their inadequate utilization in the process of production—in other words, to unemployment and the lack of markets. Imperialistic war is a rebellion of technology which collects, in the form of ‘human material,’ the claims to which society has denied its natural material.... This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art. Walter Benjamin, “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Translation from The Continental Aesthetics Reader, (Clive Cazeaux, ed.) (Routledge) p. 337. The aestheticized world that fascism fashions is a colonial one in Benjamin’s essay.

movements of the inter-war period. Sternhell more controversially argues that French culture and society was permeated by fascism—an almost mirror image of René Rémond’s vision of French reaction. Sternhell’s initial work was a study of Maurice Barrès, published the very same year as Robert Soucy’s own study of Barrès. Since then he has argued in a number of works, most famously in *Ni droite ni gauche: l'idéologie fasciste en France*, that fascism had its origins, not in Mussolini’s Italy, but in Belle Époque France, not from the right, but from the left, and not only in political organizations, but cultural movements. Sternhell’s argument that fascism originated from the left depends on emphasizing certain avant-garde intellectuals in the history of fascism, particularly Maurice Barrès and Georges Sorel, at the expense of others. There remains much to admire in Sternhell’s close textual readings of these intellectuals, though his arguments often condense a series of complex phenomena onto the actions of a few individuals whose ambiguous political allegiances are always tilted to the left. In fact, it is an explanation of fascism which looks to cultural

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30 Sternhell’s ‘totalitarian studies’ approach to the subject, ambiguously presenting fascism as a revision of Marxism, drew praise from more august scholars like Eugen Weber, whose detailed study of the far-right royalist Action Française (led by Charles Maurras) remains in its unprecedented access to its leading participants one of the principal resources on that organization. Sternhell, *Ni droite, ni gauche.*
31 See Sternhell, Mario Sznajder and Maia Ascheri, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*, translated by David Maisel (Princeton University Press, 1994); William Irvine judiciously observes that
causes that are not only identified on the left, but among avant-garde
modernists like Barrès. Sternhell’s explanation of fascism’s origin is much
more linear and teleological than, for instance, Carl Schorske’s nuanced
approach to the intersections of avant-garde culture and illiberal politics.32

The quest for a ‘fascist minimum’ (or a definition of fascism which will
reveal the core of fascism itself) is a constant in the writings of Roger Griffin.
Griffin draws on the works of Sternhell, Emilio Gentile, Stanley Payne and A.
James Gregor, to argue that any examination of fascism requires a working
definition of fascism, which he helpfully provides with his Weberian ‘ideal type’.

33 In Griffin’s Fascism: The Nature of Fascism, he presents the concept of
‘Palingenetic Ultranationalism’ as the heuristic Weberian key to empirical studies
of fascism. Griffin’s definition is elegant in its brevity though problematic in its
arbitrary application (though he more recently revises this definition by

“French fascists, or those some scholars deem to be so, emerge from all points of the
political spectrum: the Left, extreme or otherwise, if one counts Doriot, Déat, or Charles
Péguy; the Right, extreme or otherwise, if one counts Maurras, Taittinger, or La Rocque.”
Irvine, “Beyond Left and Right, and the Politics of the Third Republic: A Conversation,” in
Historical Reflections, Volume 34, Issue 2, Summer 2008, p. 142. Sternhell tends to downplay
how after the brief association of Sorelians and Action Française activists in the Cercle
Proudhon, Sorel became authoritarian and monarchist. Maurras, however, remained
Maurras. When conservative authoritarians agreed with revolutionary syndicalists, it was
not because the former had to step far outside their own shoes. And the Action Française,
though not fascist itself, was infinitely more influential through its publicity in the
development of the entire French far right, including its influencing fascist movements and
organizations. In France, the Action Française continued until the Second World War to
woo federalist liberals, revolutionary syndicalists, anti-socialist conservatives and pious
Catholics on specific issues, without compromising Maurras’s convictions. In Italy,
Mussolini and some fascist theorists certainly drew on Sorel, as well as Charles Péguy.
Others did not. But Mussolini, as with other fascist theorists, emphasized the always
situational and changing doctrine of fascism—a point which is downplayed significantly in
many reductive intellectual histories of fascism entrenching it on the left or right.

32 See Carl Schorske, Fin-de-Siècle Vienna.
33 Griffin, Fascism: The Nature of Fascism, p. 11.
expanding it by several orders of magnitude). If Griffin excoriates historians like Paxton for discussing fascism without a ‘fascist minimum’, his definition can only be usefully applied to movements and ideas in which fascism is already assumed to be present, thus putting into question the very need for this philosophical exercise. In fact, if one did not already have some limiting sense of what fascism was as it actually existed, the definition of ‘Palingentic ultranationalism’ could apply to any number of modern or modernist national fantasies. In particular, Griffin’s definition applies well to the regenerative

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34 See Griffin, Modernism and Fascism, pp. 181-2. Far more accurate and useful definitions, which do not insist on a cultural framework for understanding fascist phenomena, can be found in Robert Owen Paxton, The Anatomy of Fascism (Vintage, 2005) or Kevin Passmore, Fascism: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford University Press, 2002). Offering Paxton’s definition defeats the purpose of his study to some degree, as he is more interested in contextualizing fascism as a dynamic political behaviour which does not have a fixed or static identity. Nevertheless, he acquiesces to hurried scholars’ expectations with what is currently one of the best working definitions of fascism: “Fascism may be defined as a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion.” Paxton, The Anatomy of Fascism, p. 218.

35 Griffin’s definition is particularly problematic given the fact that many nineteenth-century modern political communities were expressed according to a cultural helix of regenerative nationalism: Frederick Jackson Turner’s Frontier Thesis, Theodore Hertzl’s Zionism or the religious reformism of Jamal ad din Al-Afghani are each explicitly modern and (in the maximal sense) modernist movements which call upon privileged national communities to be sacralised, regenerated, and reborn through sacrifice or even violent struggle against internal and external enemies. Needless to say, none of these fin-de-siècle national communities can in any historical sense be called proto-fascist or fascist. Griffin has recently attempted to resubmit a new definition of fascism, which also has the problem of potentially fitting Jacobinism almost as well as any existing historical fascism: “fascism is a form of programmatic modernism that seeks to conquer political power in order to realize a totalizing vision of national or ethnic rebirth. Its ultimate end is to overcome the decadence that has destroyed a sense of communal belonging and drained modernity of its meaning and transcendence and usher in a new era of cultural homogeneity and health.” Griffin, Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 182. French neo-traditionalism as discussed in this dissertation is another regenerative nationalism which fits either of Griffin’s attempts at defining a grail-like
preoccupations of neo-traditionalists—as we will see, perhaps none more so than committed anti-fascist Albert Camus.

There has been considerable work in the last few decades that examines the synchronicity of fascism and modernism (particularly in the pages of the journal *Modernism/Modernity*). Jerrold Seigel’s discussion of Maurice Barrès in the classic *Bohemian Paris* discusses how Barrès’s literary modernism was displaced onto proto-fascist social and political programs. This is one of the more sensitive and perceptive readings of Barrès, the intellectual most consistently associated with the origins of fascism, and yet is rarely acknowledged in ‘Fascist Studies’ debates about fascism’s intellectual origins. David Carroll’s *French Literary Fascism*, by far the most brilliant and nuanced analysis of the confluence of modernism and French fascism in the English language, examines the fascist fantasies immanent in a number of avant-garde intellectuals’ works, including Barrès, Charles Maurras, Charles Péguy, Drieu la Rochelle and others. Definitional distinctions between and within modernism and the avant-garde, and their ‘fascist minimum’. It was under certain conditions appropriated by fascists, but was not in any useful or accurate sense itself the origin of fascism. Griffin’s more recent work, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, again argues the confluence of modernism and fascism, though barely mentions the already voluminous literature on the subject. Instead of confining modernism to only aesthetic literary techniques, as he argues too many conventional studies of modernism do, he offers a “maximal” definition which also covers under its umbrella social and political attempts to regenerate society. For example, Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* is presented as a modernist work. Here Griffin mistakes literary scholars using the term modernism in a productive limited sense, for their inability to understand or recognize broader modernist impulses or programs among scientists, scholars and politicians among others. But literary studies of modernism depend on each of these definitions—modernism in a limited, and what he calls a “maximal”, sense. Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, passim.
relations to fascism, are explored with an appreciation for the theoretical literature of Lukács and Gramsci in Andrew Hewitt’s *Fascist Modernism*. And Mark Antliff’s recent *Avant-Garde Fascism*, though it relies on Griffin’s sometimes reductive notions of fascism, nonetheless offers a much more grounded and concrete reading of the Sorelians he identifies with French fascism. In the end, debates about fascism in France have revealed that any discussion must necessarily be and remain tentative and specific in its focus—this is not a weakness of the historiography but a sign of caution among historians. In this regard, this present study of neo-traditionalism argues that some of the ideas associated with the origins of fascism are not best examined through the reductive telos of proto-fascism, but instead as the elided ideas useful to many permutations of Frenchness, and from which French fascists—among others—drew. Instead of measuring how fascist a particular movement’s or intellectual’s ideas were, this study seeks to understand how the ideas of neo-classicist and colonialist reaction were developed and shared, and how they were seen by intellectuals themselves: as a promise for regenerating France, but one that could be republican or anti-republican, monarchist, far-right, liberal, conservative or leftist. In this regard, I believe that intellectual histories of fascism still have a lot of catching up to do with the more recent nuanced political and social histories.

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of the far right offered by leading scholars such as Kevin Passmore, Sean Kennedy, and Samuel Kalman, who have refined the contributions of William Irvine and Robert Soucy in this historiography.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{Neo-Traditionalism and Colonialism}

Unlike some scholars of fascism, Robert Owen Paxton does not quarantine colonialism from his discussion. Passmore and Griffin argue that fascism was not necessarily “militarily expansionist” or imperialist. Unlike Griffin (who in \textit{Fascism: The Nature of Fascism}, merely assumes this to be the case without any cited evidence) Passmore does provide an example of how fascism could at times not be imperialist.\textsuperscript{38} Ironically he cites as evidence the fact that some fascists advocated a fraternal ‘fascist international’. As we will see in Chapter Four, arch-colonialist Louis Bertrand was in fact one of the keynote speakers at the fascist Nationalist International—organized by Hans K.E.L. Keller to unite European fascist states against Communism, \textit{and} for military expansion… but \textit{outside of}

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\textsuperscript{37} Soucy and Irvine, coming at the question of French fascism from a political history and social history perspective, dove into the police and government archives to argue that popular far-right organizations like the Croix de Feu were fascist in aim and deed. More recent scholarship, notably by Kevin Passmore and Samuel Kalman, builds upon this work in their approaches to inter-war French far-right organizations and parties. These studies portray particular groups as either oscillating in time between fascism and authoritarian conservatism, and/or composed of competing interests. Robert Soucy, \textit{French Fascism, The First Wave}, 1924-1933 (Yale University Press, 1986); Soucy, \textit{French Fascism: The Second Wave,} 1933-1939 (Yale University Press, 1997); Irvine, \textit{French Conservatism in Crisis: The Republican Federation of France in the 1930s} (Louisiana State University Press, 1979); Passmore, \textit{From Liberalism to Fascism: The Right in a French Province,} 1928-1939 (Cambridge University Press, 1997); Samuel Kalman, \textit{The Extreme Right in Interwar France: The Faisceau and the Croix de Feu} (Ashgate Publishing, 2008).

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Europe. Only by quarantining extra-European colonialism from the doctrines of fascists, only by imagining that invasions inside Europe alone constitute a ‘militarily expansionist’ doctrine, only by minimizing the concentration camps interring Libyans and the poison gas dropped on them as well as Ethiopians, could fascism be imagined not to be imperialist. In any event, the question about whether fascism is by nature imperialist is less interesting than the question of how and why they intersected, or did not, historically. Paxton observes that Italian fascism was radicalized by its colonial conquests:

...authentic radicalization came into view with Italian imperial expansion.... In his colonial campaigns, Mussolini took some steps that Hitler never dared take. For example, he used poison gas in Libya and Ethiopia [citation removed] Italian colonial administration was overtly racialist [citation removed] The war in Ethiopia also helped stimulate radicalization at home in the mid-1930s.  

In the case of Germany, the Herero and Nama genocide in German South-West Africa is increasingly recognized in North American academia as a precursor to the Nazi genocide of European Jews — in the concrete terms of the individuals involved, technologies employed, language utilized, and the administrative structure of the genocide. 

Aimé Césaire’s Discours sur le colonialisme (1955) is one of the seminal texts of anticolonialism, but is rarely treated as a discourse on fascism which it also is. Césaire’s humanism, one that would encompass all of humanity,

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was opposed to that which would be cloaked in a racist and exclusionary Eurocentrism:

First we must study how colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism...

...and they hide the truth from themselves... that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack.41

Discours sur le colonialisme is second only to Fanon’s Les damnés de la terre in terms of its legacy as a French-language refusal of European imperialism. In his recent preface to the work, Robin D. G. Kelley accurately describes it as a polemic. But Césaire’s essay, typical of his work in general, also exhibits his deep familiarity with French intellectual history—an intellectual history which he unpacks in its pages, drawing upon examples from the Comte de Lautréamont to Jules Romain, from academician Ernest Renan to his grandson, Action Française icon and colonial propagandist Ernest Psichari. It was written with an eye to a doubled context: written both in the wake of the Second World War and in the midst of the nationalist struggles against European colonialism. On the one hand, Césaire examines the incompatibility of European humanism and European colonialism. On the other, he argues that the phenomenon of European fascism was the return

to European shores of a colonial violence that had been woven into the prior histories of much of the rest of the modern world. Like many colonialist and anticolonial writers of the few decades before him, he was explicit in drawing parallels between the doctrines and practices of fascism and colonialism. He suggested that the French bourgeoisie had misunderstood their own occupation under the Nazis, and missed its coming signs, because, until then, the measures the Nazis enacted “had been applied only to non-European peoples.” This is one of the more famous texts to link the practices of fascist occupation to colonial occupation. But Césaire was far from alone in conflating fascism and colonialism. Césaire’s work has been returned to again and again by historians of colonialism. But *Discours sur le colonialisme* as far as I know has yet to be cited by an historian of French fascism. If it is because of a blurring of boundaries between colonialism and fascism, the same could be said of many of works of the greatest intellectuals of the twentieth century, who argued Césaire’s very point linking the histories of colonialism and fascism, from W.E.B. Du Bois to Hannah Arendt, and more recently Sven Lindqvist and Enzo Traverso, and including two of the leading French avant-garde intellectuals of the twentieth century who are the particular foci of this study: Louis Bertrand and Albert Camus.43

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Certainly, this conflation was not an isolated phenomenon in the twentieth century. Hannah Arendt for example situated colonialism as one of the most important points of origin in the rise of modern totalitarianism. A number of recent scholars, like Enzo Traverso and Sven Lindqvist, have drawn important connections between colonial and fascist regimes. This is a scholarly line of inquiry—recently receiving more attention—that extends back to writers both prior to, and following, the Second World War. George Padmore critiqued English imperialism as a “colonial fascism” (a phrase that Samuel Kalman, historian of the Croix de Feu and Radical Right, has more recently used to describe the far-right political organizations in colonial Algeria).

This conflation of colonialism and fascism is one that has appeared in a great number of works of various political and intellectual traditions, in which fascism and colonialism appear coiled in a history of the twentieth century told across many different texts and contexts. As a general or abstract observation, it can be a banal and obfuscating one. It would be highly surprising that two defining political phenomena of the twentieth century would not be wedded at the very least in a number of works. Though discernibly distinct, the histories of European far-right politics and colonialism do overlap however in concrete and specific ways (as do the histories of socialism and colonialism, or liberalism and colonialism), and this is what this thesis is most concerned with. The important thing is to examine such conflations in their historical specificity. Too often
histories of colonial Algeria emphasize the failures of metropolitan liberalism, but undervalue the successes of colonial fascism among the settler population—a context that was as important to the development of Bertrand’s and Camus’s neo-traditionalism as was the fin-de-siècle avant-garde. Blurring the lines between fascism and colonialism is not the aim of this dissertation, nor is it to re-enter at least momentarily exhausted debates about defining fascism as an abstract concept. But it is the aim of this study to examine the confluences of these ideas as they occurred and as they were conceived by historical actors at the time, to refuse to quarantine colonial history from the history of the far-right and/or of fascism, any more than either of these historiographies should be isolated from the history of modernism.

In terms of colonial Algeria specifically, a number of historians have pointed to the relative strength of far-right parties in these southernmost French départements. In Paxton’s and Michael Marrus’s _Vichy France and the Jews_, a section is devoted to colonial Algeria, where anti-Semitism was more strongly exhibited than anywhere else in territorial France. Yet relatively little attention has been paid by historians of fascism to fascist movements in Algeria, just as few historians of colonial Algeria have examined the

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fascist undercurrent to settler society. A forthcoming study by Samuel Kalman is an important step towards better understanding the popularity of fascism in settler politics — that to understand French fascism as a whole, including the introduction of anti-Semitic legislation during the Vichy Regime, one needs to understand Algerian settler society and its influence on metropolitan France. Kalman identifies the doctrines of settler far-right reaction as having their origins in the works of Louis Bertrand in particular. In other words, neo-traditionalism is also a key to understanding the intellectual framework of settler reaction.

Algerian intellectuals in the 1930s and 1940s, settlers like Albert Camus, integrationists and assimilationists like Ferhat Abbas and Rabah Zenati, or revolutionary nationalists of the Parti du Peuple Algérien, noted the connections or similarities between French colonialism on the one hand and fascism or Nazism on the other. They wrote about what these similarities, historical or morphological, meant for people struggling within these systems — but located their discussions within the dynamic context of inter-war Algeria. Other settler Algerian intellectuals valenced these phenomena positively or without equivocation: Louis Bertrand, author of the Algérianiste literary movement as well

46 I am indebted to Samuel Kalman for generously allowing me to read his manuscript of “Fascism and Algérianité: The Croix de Feu, Pied-Noir Xenophobia, and the Indigenous Question in 1930s Algeria,” in The French Colonial Mind: Mental Maps of Empire and French Colonial Policy-Making (University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming); Jon Kim Munholland was also kind enough to pass on an unpublished manuscript of his “The French Colonial Mind and the Challenge of Islam: The Case of Ernest Psichari” which discusses the crucial importance of one of the colonial icons of neo-traditionalists, Ernest Psichari, who was also the grandson of Ernest Renan.
as the hagiography Hitler, praised both fascism and colonialism. His works threaded fascism and colonialism together as interdependent components of the same political and aesthetic worldview that promised a new order on both sides of the Mediterranean. It is in this specific, and relative to France and most French far-right intellectuals unambiguous, context that fascism and colonialism is discussed.

**Neo-traditionalism’s Routes and Roots**

This study owes part of its inspiration from Paul Gilroy’s discussion of the inter-relation between ‘routes’ and ‘roots’, or diasporic and fixed identities, in the fashioning of trans-Atlantic Black history and authenticity. The interplay of diasporic and fixed identities is not only relevant to African diasporic political culture, which like other diasporic identities questions and yet often relies on nationalist visions.\(^47\) It is the uncommon argument of this dissertation that nationalist visions of France have been constructed by mapping the routes of colonial tourism and empire over the roots of authentic Frenchness.\(^48\) To put it plainly if controversially: this dissertation argues that, to a surprising degree,

\(^47\) “Marked by its European origins, modern black political culture has always been more interested in the relationship of identity to roots and rootedness than in seeing identity as a process of movement and mediation that is more appropriately approached via the homonym routes.” Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 19. This dissertation agrees with Gilroy that “dealing equally with the significance of roots and routes... should undermine the purified appeal of either Africentrism or the Eurocentrism it struggles to answer.” Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 190.

\(^48\) One of the indispensable recent works on modern French history covering the manufacture of Frenchness in this period is Patrick Young, *The Consumer as National Subject: Bourgeois Tourism in the French Third Republic, 1880-1914* (PhD thesis, Department of History, Columbia University, 2000).
what is considered the ‘authentic’ roots of French culture—whose tendrils braid classicism, provincial and peasant authenticity, Mediterranean or Latin culture as defined by many key intellectuals of the modern French canon—are in fact the product of the transnational movements of avant-garde neo-classicists in the very recent past. This history of neo-traditionalism intersects with the historiographies of modernism, fascism and colonialism, but it is more than only an intersection to these debates. It is my hope that it opens specific questions about the intertwined neo-classicist and colonial origins of modern French identity itself.49

The second chapter of this dissertation examines the origin of neo-traditionalist subcultures and situates them in their cultural, economic, political and social milieu. In this chapter the focus is on Paris from the 1880s to the early 1900s—a center for intellectuals from across Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

49 Gilroy writes that “the problematic intellectual heritage of Euro-American modernity still determines the manner in which nationality is understood within black political discourse. In particular, it conditions the continuing aspiration to acquire a supposedly authentic, natural and stable identity.” Gilroy, “It Ain’t Where You’re From, It’s Where You’re At...” Third Text, 5: 13, p. 4. This intellectual heritage conditions the manner in which French nationality is understood as well. However, this intellectual heritage, be it ‘Western Civilization’, classicism, or canonicity, is a constantly shifting and unstable one, determined more by retroactive construction in the fugue of social and political transformations in particular periods and among specific groups of individuals. Neo-traditionalism was a means of refashioning the roots of French modernity as “authentic, natural and stable” by reaching out to colonial and classicist fantasies in the fin-de-siècle. More accurately, Frenchness is something that has been constructed at the intersections of millions of people’s everyday lives and decisions, or as Renan put it as part of a “daily plebiscite”, but presently existing nationalist fantasies of Frenchness have as much to do with the fantasies of fin-de-siècle avant-garde intellectuals who strove to immerse French people in neo-traditionalist visions of Frenchness, in the midst of the cultural and political crises; theirs was an image of Frenchness in which many French people’s own existing communities were immersed and in the historical record, drowned. France is something which means a great deal to millions of people. It is a home and a tradition. Challenging the ways in which this community was circumscribed, quarantined, and isolated by modern nationalist fantasies does not mean jeopardizing France (as if that could even be so)—it means challenging a recently manufactured and xenophobic image of France which, in the pages of neo-traditionalists, has exiled the incredible richness of its own past.
Chapter Three looks to one of the most important intellectuals of the period: Louis Bertrand. Bertrand’s early works are bifurcated in different historiographies. To colonial historians he is the most influential settler writer in Algeria. To scholars of French aesthetics he is one of the most important voices in the ‘classical revival’ in 1890s and 1900s France. Yet these were not separate concerns for Bertrand. This chapter integrates colonial and metropolitan histories to examine the colonialism of French neo-classicism, and the classicism of French colonial literature. Chapter Four examines how the ideas of Bertrand and others moved from aesthetic representations of a Greater France encompassing the colonial Mediterranean, to championing far-right European organizations in the 1920s and 1930s. In the case of Bertrand, this journey took him from the Roman ruins of Tipasa, Algeria, to the neo-classical fascist spectacle at Nuremberg, Germany. The fifth chapter returns to a broader study of the social, political, and cultural contexts of neo-traditionalism—but rather than focus on the cultural effervescence in Paris of the 1890s, this chapter examines 1930s Algiers on the eve of the Second World War. Algeria was home to the most virulent French fascists of the inter-war period even though this context for the growth of fascism has been overwhelmingly neglected by historians. It was not only a crucible for race riots and fascism, but was home to one of the most notable intellectuals of the twentieth century, Albert Camus. For someone as famous as Camus, scholars seldom examine his early dramas. The sixth chapter sheds new light on Camus’s
anti-fascist activities. It locates his ideas in their context: the settler community of Algeria in which fascist organizations, as well as neo-traditionalist ideas, proliferated. Camus attempted to revise the neo-traditionalist fantasies which were the core of settler myths in Algeria. In order to accomplish this, Camus turned to Artaudian dramaturgical theories of terror to immerse his audiences in a purgative spectacle of violence. Chapter Seven looks to one of the most shocking elements of Camus’ intellectual formation which has yet to be discussed: his profound intellectual debt to neo-traditionalist Maurice Barrès—with whom he disagreed politically on a great many points. As Camus put it to his mentor Jean Grenier: “I like my ideas on the left and my men on the right.” This chapter examines a Camus who might be less satisfying to both critics and champions of this intellectual, but it is a portrait that is more accurate and nuanced.
CHAPTER TWO

Neo-Traditionalism in Greater France: Tourist Routes and Classical Roots

“They say that a classical renaissance has begun.”
- Agathon (pseudonym for Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde), Les Jeunes gens d’aujourd’hui (1913)

“We are indebted to the barbarians, to the primitives of 1890, for bringing certain essential truths back into focus. Not to reproduce nature and life by approximations or by improvised trompe-l’oeils, but on the contrary to reproduce our emotions and our dreams by representing them with harmonious forms and colours—that, I continue to believe, was a new way of posing the problem of art—at least for our time; and it’s an idea that still bears fruit.”
- Maurice Denis, “De Gauguin et de Van Gogh au classicisme” (1909)

“One can only find [men of action] either in barbarous countries where adventure is still possible, or instead by returning to the past.”
- Louis Bertrand, Flaubert à Paris ou le mort vivant (1921)

Since the 1970s, a great deal has been written on the origins of French fascism. 1972 saw the publications of separate intellectual biographies of Maurice Barrès, by Robert Soucy and Zeev Sternhell. Although they disagreed on many fundamental points about his life and work, they did agree that it was with this Boulangiste deputy and leading anti-Dreyfusard, as well as among his contemporaries, that one could locate some of the earliest formulations of a distinctive French fascism—perhaps especially surprising, even earlier than in Italy or Germany. The source of many of the disagreements between Soucy and Sternhell was as to whether they located the intellectual origins of fascism on the

right or left of a political spectrum: whether Barrès was a consistently conservative far-right figure as Soucy argued, or a non-Marxist socialist who then drew closer to the right as Sternhell averred. This chapter, indebted to the trailblazing work of David Carroll on the literary vanguard of French fascism and Venita Datta’s on the fin-de-siècle avant-garde, seeks to shift this debate away from what has become a regular pattern of taxonomizing the political allegiance of fin-de-siècle intellectuals, who through their ideas were thus putatively the founders of fascism. It is the argument here that it was not a single individual, nor a group of individuals, who could be easily located at a particular location on a generalized political spectrum, but rather among a group of intellectuals committed to an aesthetic revision of modernism in the 1890s that the intellectual origins of an important (though not exclusive) strand of fascism can be located. The question is not whether these avant-garde intellectuals were or saw themselves as left or right (which in reality was as often as not in ways quite distinct from broader political parties and programs), but rather what subculture they themselves shared. It was among the neo-traditionalist avant-garde, neoclassicists reacting to anxieties about cultural dissolution and economic decline at the height of French colonialism, that particular aesthetic strategies coalesced into

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2 Datta’s *The Birth of a National Icon* and Carroll’s *French Literary Fascism* are important and sensitive readings of, among other things, fin-de-siècle intellectuals. See Venita Datta, *The Birth of a National Icon: The Literary Avant-Garde and the Origins of the Intellectual in France* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999); David Carroll, *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Antisemitism, and the Ideology of Culture* (Princeton University Press, 1998) Despite its title, Carroll is not primarily seeking to deduce any particular intellectual’s fascist quotient, but instead examines the nexus between aesthetics and politics in key texts from intellectuals who exerted considerable influence upon (and within) the French far right.
an aesthetic-political world-view obsessed with the regeneration of French culture.

This chapter discusses the peculiar ways in which neo-traditionalist intellectuals of the fin-de-siècle shared an aesthetic-political program which sought to revitalize a decadent France and its people by appealing to regenerative fantasies of provincial and colonial vitality and authenticity. Neo-traditionalism grafted together French fantasies of anti-republican reaction and colonialism using the aesthetic techniques and strategies of avant-garde modernism. A coherent neo-traditionalist world-view emerged in the last years of the nineteenth century out of the French avant-garde, a world-view that drew on and crystallized these components of modernism, reaction and colonialism. However, this is not to reductively argue that a combination of these ideas necessarily produced neo-traditionalism as a phenomenon, or that neo-traditionalists did not share many of the concerns with other contemporaries with similar experiences. But to understand neo-traditionalism as a coherent

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3 The term ‘world-view’ can be interpreted in many ways, but can be read here in relation to the concept of ‘discourse’ as used by Michel Foucault. The term discourse, as Foucault uses it in The History of Sexuality for example, and has been commonly taken up by cultural historians, is about an entire social-cultural framework in which particular social or cultural expressions might occur. Although discourse has been appropriated to signify in many other, sometimes contradictory ways (often conflated with ‘paradigm’), a ‘neo-traditional world-view’ is not properly a discourse any more than a ‘Whig’ discourse would be. It is instead a segment of practices and expressions elaborated and popularized by particular people within specific avant-garde movements. What remains missing is the specificity of who was utilizing these expressions. These are expressions that these figures elaborated by drawing on overlapping discourses of colonialism or decadence, but also by grafting together content from sources ranging from the Pléiade poets, Hippolyte Taine, Arthur Schopenhauer and so on, and organized in relation to social, political and economic concerns that pattern the writings and expressions of this group—not uniformly and identically, but inasmuch as neo-traditionalists identified themselves as a coherent group, thus with a coherent ‘world-view’. See Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume I. (Vintage, 1990).
movement or set of movements, at least coherent to its contemporaries, depends on understanding the shared experiences among neo-traditionalists themselves: as individuals and as members of the specific avant-garde movements and groups to which they gravitated.

Neo-traditionalism was an aesthetic-political framework originating in the “classical renaissance” of the Belle Époque; this aesthetic-political framework provided the conceptual material for regenerative fantasies later taken up in political movements commonly associated with both French fascism and settler colonialism in the twentieth century, but was evident in earlier aesthetic movements, particularly among 1890s Symbolists, the École Romane and the Naturistes. However, this neo-traditionalist world-view, if crucial to understanding cultural constructions of later French fascism and Algerian settler society, was also adopted by people advocating other distinct doctrines, including as we will later see, anti-fascists, and expressed many ideas that were popular among various French social groups in the fin-de-siècle and after. Individual fascists or colonialists had many motivations and ways of conceiving their participation in these movements. Neo-traditionalism was nonetheless a cultural grammar shared by many later French figures identified with fascism as well as settler intellectuals, but not a grammar exclusive to them. In other words, neo-traditionalism was a crucial conceptual framework for many French fascist theorists, but did not necessarily produce French fascists. If these ideas were
crucial in elaborating a settler colonialist as well as fascist aesthetic-political world-view by and among intellectuals specifically, they did not necessarily translate to ways of conceiving or organizing these colonialist or fascist organizations by its other participants. To assume the world-view of intellectuals and other participants was the same is to assume the viewpoint of these intellectuals themselves, in which they constructed themselves as Promethean shapers of society, at the expense of a broader historical understanding of these organizations and movements.

This thesis illustrates how ideas that at one time, in the fin-de-siècle, had been presented and interpreted as neo-traditionalist or colonialist, came to be presented in hindsight as necessarily fascist as they were appropriated by later movements and organizations. The fact that these earlier ideas were so useful to expressing fascist propaganda certainly means it is worth examining how neo-traditionalist ideas of colonial regeneration and national unity were constructed in the fin-de-siècle, and then were retroactively appropriated as having always been fascist or proto-fascist. In specific conditions, neo-traditionalism, corresponding but not equivalent to Roger Griffin’s “Palingenetic Ultranationalism,” came to reflect either colonial or fascist, or even more rarely anti-fascist stances—and had affinities with many fin-de-siècle political and aesthetic programs. The point is to understand these ideas in actual evolving and specific contexts, among specific groups and individuals—rather than imagine
these ideas permeating French culture generally as ‘discourse’ or ‘mood’. As far as this thesis is concerned, it is only by demanding this specificity in a history of ideas that an understanding can be reached as to why in fact there were so many affinities between Algerian settler fantasies and French metropolitan fascist ones—affinities that become clearer when examining the intellectuals who constructed these fantasies and their specific shared origins and experiences. The neo-traditionalist crystallization of ideas of colonial regeneration and national unity would in turn go on to exert a profound influence on many twentieth-century French and even Anglo-American intellectuals, who certainly were and are not fascist. The details of how these ideas migrated across political, colonial and national frontiers in the twentieth century are examined in later chapters. This second chapter is about the neo-traditionalist world-view itself, its social and cultural origins, and its particular crystallization of fin-de-siècle preoccupations and fantasies of modernism, colonialism and political reaction—among a restricted subculture of French people: the avant-garde. The following two chapters offer a closer analysis of the specific ways these ideas were crafted by a particular intellectual, Louis Bertrand. Bertrand was particularly influential among neo-traditionalists, and his ideas were particularly useful to both settler and fascist organizations.

The avant-garde of the 1890s comprised members of the proliferating modernist aesthetic movements such as the Symbolists, the École Romane and
the Naturistes (the latter not to be confused with the same-titled clothing-
optional movement of contemporary France). Symbolists in the 1880s were
accused of celebrating decadence and indeed took the name Symbolist to
distinguish themselves from the epithet *dégadent*, but by the early 1890s they, and
other avant-garde movements breaking from them like the École Romane and the
Naturistes, came to celebrate and champion variations of a modernist-infused
traditionalism, or neo-traditionalism. In fact, it was in a Symbolist manifesto by
Maurice Denis in 1890 that the term ‘neo-traditionalism’ was first used to define
his rejection of Naturalism and Impressionism. Neo-traditionalism instead chose
to reappropriate classical tradition within an avant-garde aesthetic framework.
This was not in order to retreat into idealist fantasy, but to express what neo-
traditionalists saw as the more ‘real’ spiritual vision of France’s struggles that
had been concealed by the material superficiality of the Naturalists or
Impressionists.⁴

Modernism, colonialism, political reaction. It might seem a strange and
arbitrary set of ideas that avant-garde neo-traditionalists would graft together as
an aesthetic-political program for social regeneration and that they would
propagate to a French public. After all, there were many modernists, that is
avant-garde artists and writers, who were not neo-traditionalists. Colonialist
ideas, that is to say cultural expressions which defined France by its overseas

conquests or in opposition to a fetishized Oriental barbarism, were also closely associated with the expanding Republican state and certainly not the exclusive domain of anti-republican reactionaries. And the far-right, composed of anti-republican and anti-socialist figures and parties, was indeed eclectic in its positions and conceptual affinities: arguably the most influential far-right intellectual, Charles Maurras, was decidedly hostile to further French overseas conquest until into the twentieth century when he began assuming Louis Bertrand’s views of settler society and French imperialism.\(^5\) So why are these three particular components used as a way of understanding the origins of a French neo-traditional world-view? First and foremost, each of these ideational components—modernism, colonialism, and political reaction—were individual but highly visible lights in the firmament of fin-de-siècle elite French culture, and each connected to any number of other cultural constellations. But what made neo-traditionalists different was that they manufactured their doctrine by

\(^5\) Nonetheless, as we will see in this chapter, even Maurras’s earlier neo-traditionalist ideas on France were informed by popular colonialist ideas circulating at the time. There is an important distinction between advocating an imperialist political program for France, and constructing notions of Frenchness in opposition to Orientalized enemies. The former was rejected by Maurras until into the twentieth century as being a republican program though he later became an important advocate of French imperialist expansion; the latter was central to his Mediterranean fantasies of French identity from his days in the École Roman. As Jean-Claude Izzo and Thierry Fabre observe, “Maurras’s Mediterranean desires to remain pure from all mixing and cosmopolitanism, particularly coming from the Semitic Orient.” In Jean-Claude Izzo and Thierry Fabre, \textit{La Méditerranée française} (Maisonneuve & Larose, 2000), p. 75. Maurras’s notion of a pure Hellenic origin to French genius, as we will see this chapter, must be defined in opposition to the Orient. Izzo and Fabre are correct in noting his xenophobic construction of a Mediterranean legacy free of Semitic and Oriental influence, but what is also notable is that his actual attempts to elaborate this pure legacy repeatedly fall into a definitional abyss: they lack clear definition except in relief to his conjuration of a phantasmatic Orient to which he opposes Greek reason, order, and measure.
drawing these components together. Together, they formed the particular constellation of ideas that comprised French neo-traditionalism. This conjunction of ideas of modernism, reaction, and colonialism is seldom explored as the organizing set of principles among these French intellectuals of the 1890s. However, modernism and colonialism nonetheless appear together in many canonical cultural histories of the French far-right, just as modernism and fascism are integral components of Algerian settler intellectual culture: it is modernism, political reaction and colonialism that appear, again and again, side-by-side as constituent components of a neo-traditionalist world-view distinct from traditional or conservative ones. It was a world-view that was crucial in elaborating these different movements across the French Mediterranean.

This chapter retraces some familiar historiographical ground on the origins of French fascism, but at a point-of-origin origin not in 1900s revanchiste French politics on the eve of the First World War, nor in political movements surrounding Boulangisme or the Dreyfus Affair, all of which are of course relevant and have been the subject of intense scrutiny, but in 1890s French neo-traditionalist aesthetic movements that were as concerned with regenerating France as a Mediterranean empire as they were with revanchisme against Germany. Neo-traditionalism was an aesthetic-political world-view, in that neo-traditionalists looked to aestheticizing politics—reshaping politics through art—as the means of overcoming the political cul-de-sac of French republicanism, class
formation, and colonial modernity. The aesthetic strategies which were adapted into the political arena to fashion a Western identity synonymous with a colonial Greater France, and its constantly destabilizing paradoxes that French intellectuals could never reconcile, are thus worth examining in greater detail, before we turn to how they were adapted as foundational models of society by both settler and fascist intellectuals.

In classic cultural histories as ideologically and methodologically distinct as Herman Lebovics’s *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity 1900-1945*, Eugen Weber’s *The Nationalist Revival in France*, or David Carroll’s *French Literary Fascism*, aesthetic modernism as an intellectual background and colonialism as a central preoccupation are presented as keys to understanding the emergence of French far-right ideas in the Belle Époque. In *True France*, Herman Lebovics examines, in chapters focusing on French regionalism, imperialism, and colonial exhibitions, some of the ways in which an at once modernist and traditionalist vision of Frenchness was constructed and expressed from the early years of the twentieth century. As Lebovics puts it:

> A paradigm of essentialist cultural identity dominated French cultural and political life from the second founding of the Third Republic and the Dreyfus affair until the dissolution of Vichy rule. Soon after its apotheosis in Vichy it exploded into bits. Forged from intellectual pieces and social practices of a narrowed vision of the possibilities of French culture in the late nineteenth century, a conservative way of thinking, what after Foucault I would call an

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episteme, took on this modern, militant, and political form at the beginning of the twentieth.\textsuperscript{7}

This construction of an essentialist cultural identity that Lebovics discusses was intimately tied to the nationalist revival in fin-de-siècle France. In Weber’s *The Nationalist Revival in France*, the celebrated heroes whom he examines as key to this revival, such as Hubert Lyautey or Ernest Psichari (not to mention the Marquis de Morès, Cardinal Lavigerie and many others) were icons because of their roles in French colonial conquest, heroes to a generation of metropolitan “thrilled and excited by the reading of what were revealingly called ‘colonial epics’”\textsuperscript{8} at a time of revanchisme against Germany — the colonial source for regenerating French vitalism in a period of perceived decline vis-à-vis other European powers. Modern colonialism signified for conservative Alfred de Tarde a return to a national tradition of French imperialism, and “an upsurge in the stifled energies of the race.”\textsuperscript{8}

The colony, even more than ‘authentic’ provincial life, was the privileged field of battle for French regeneration and vitalism in the face of cosmopolitan decadence, and thus a privileged site for redefining Frenchness itself among intellectuals obsessed with French energy and vitalism. Metropolitan France was itself, according to representations by cultural and scholarly elites, pervaded by ‘oriental’ cosmopolitanism as part of its decadent condition of colonial

\textsuperscript{7}Lebovics looks especially at the ways in which the new social science of anthropology had contributed to fashioning an image of a unitary and ‘authentic’ France in an era of nationalism, colonialism, and modernity. Herman Lebovics, *True France*, esp. pp. 12-50.

modernity. But this degenerative ‘invasion’ of France provided its own cure: a foreign cultural contagion was at hand in the metropole against which one could redefine Frenchness without recourse to traveling to the colonies. Finally, in a very strange and underexplored way, exclusivist national visions of France presupposed an inherent ‘Oriental’ origin at the heart of French culture itself. The closer neo-traditionalists like Barrès, Maurras or Bertrand looked to recovering France’s Greco-Latin origins, the more both these Mediterranean origins and a modern self-sufficient notion of the French nation slipped into an exoticism and imitation of its opposite. For example, David Carroll’s examination of the literary origins of French far-right reaction and fascism observes that for avant-garde neo-traditionalist Maurice Barrès, one of the principal architects and icons of the nationalist revival,

‘the West’ (and more specifically, France) exists as a unified subject and possesses a cultural identity that is manifest in its master narratives and myths only by means of the suppression, negation, or appropriation of ‘the Orient’; that is, of all the non-Greek origins that France (‘the West’) carries in some sense within itself (within its own imagination and identity) from the start.⁹

In order to get to the heart of this neo-traditionalist world-view and its aesthetic-political strategies for defining France, this chapter, first, examines the social and cultural context of this neo-traditionalist movement of the 1890s and then, second, examines more closely neo-traditionalist ideas and aesthetic strategies. This chapter focuses on a group of cultural elites among whom these

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⁹ Carroll, French Literary Fascism, p. 33.
ideas were fashioned and were most popular: the avant-garde intellectuals (artists, writers and other public figures) who embraced a neo-traditionalist world-view and would provide through their public writings important aesthetic strategies of French authenticity and colonial privilege for their readership, and for an ensuing nationalist revival in France, and an intellectual subculture in settler Algeria. To put it in other terms, late-nineteenth century neo-traditionalism was the aesthetic grammar by which a regenerative politics of French authenticity and ultra-nationalism was constructed in the early twentieth century, even if the elements of its vocabulary were part of a much broader elite culture.

Neo-traditionalism was a shared set of assumptions about a traditional ‘authentic’ France often expressed as if it extended back to the Gauls or Romans, but was in actuality a rediverted and narrowed genealogy of Frenchness. It was largely a new creation in reaction to the social and cultural crises of the Third Republic and in an era of French colonialism. French neo-traditionalism was a modernist or avant-garde way of reconstructing French politics and aesthetics. It did so by reconstructing French classicism (often but not always associating it with a traditional Catholicism and/or monarchism) in order to regenerate and restore a forward-looking, expansive France in opposition to a decadent and degenerating modernity. It was a future promised by a return to the past in
opposition to a decaying present.\textsuperscript{10} Neo-traditionalism was revolutionary, but not in a liberal or socialist sense. It explicitly reacted against what its advocates saw as the destructive and revolutionary elements within these two ideologies that were supposedly a foreign contagion infecting the French body politic. It was an avant-garde conservatism. As Louis Bertrand put it in his highly influential turn-of-the-century essay “La Renaissance classique”: “All fruitful revolutions have always only ever been a return to the national tradition that had been disfigured by foreign influence. In this sense, \textit{but in this sense alone}, we are revolutionaries.”\textsuperscript{11}

In other words, neo-traditionalists saw themselves as appealing to revolution in its original or classical sense, that is, a full revolution to a point of original grandeur in the French past, not to a new innovation. And yet, in the modern society in which they \textit{actually} lived, theirs was as total an innovation, both aesthetically and politically, as the most avant-garde visions of Bohemian Paris, whence so many of them originated. It took for granted that French modernity had sundered France’s ties to the past, and thus required new leaders to reinvent tradition for rootless French masses. The more decadent and degenerate society had become, or was presented as by neo-traditionalists, the more violent and

\textsuperscript{10} Maurras for instance “advocated a return to a classical aesthetics and order of taste in order to restore beauty; a return to the Catholic Church and its institutions and ceremonies in order to restore truth; and a return to the monarchy in order to restore political continuity, harmony, and national unity and grandeur. Maurras’s literary and political activism, therefore, was one that combated modernity itself and attempted to restore to literature and politics the forms and truths supposedly established and guaranteed by tradition.” Carroll, \textit{French Literary Fascism}, p. 76.

total this revolution would have to be. Neo-traditionalism, examined here as the particular aesthetic-political movement (and not as a broader French nationalist ‘mood’ as Weber’s writing argues, drawing on most of the same set of sources), had its origins in the French avant-garde—intellectuals who would reinvent tradition in a decadent and anarchic modernity. These intellectuals helped create the framework by which both an integral nationalism and settler colonialism would be expressed as ‘authentic’ identities. This group, many of whom had been one-time Symbolists, included among its many members: the artist and art critic Maurice Denis; poet Jean Moréas (born Yannis Papadimantopoulos), who managed the delicate feat of being at the forefront of aesthetic and xenophobic nationalist movements in two separate nations, France and Greece; Charles Maurras, his Provençal and Félibre disciple and leader of the most influential neo-traditionalist and ultra-nationalist organization, the Action Française; writer Paul Adam; literary critic Camille Mauclaire; Joachim Gasquet, friend of Maurras and Cézanne; Maurice LeBlond, nephew of Émile Zola; the “Prince of Youth” of Bohemia, Maurice Barrès, whose texts were as canonical as there were among neo-traditionalists; and Louis Bertrand, who would succeed Barrès at the Académie Française. The next two chapters examine Bertrand’s colonialist works and his later metropolitan fascist writings in close detail as examples of how these ideas migrated over, and back across, the colonial threshold of metropolitan France and settler Algeria. But it is in French cultural crises of the 1880s and
1890s, in which modernist aesthetics were dreamed of providing the means to revitalize a modern rootless society and its traditions, that Louis Bertrand’s work must be first situated in order to understand the ways in which aesthetics and politics were wedded in his writings on each side of the Mediterranean. And as with these other neo-traditionalist intellectuals, it is in a threading of avant-garde, colonial and far-right influences that this basis for a regenerated ‘True France’ was fashioned. So this chapter examines the curious ways in which these three too often isolated topics were cobbled together by a number of fin-de-siècle French intellectuals as the building blocks of a coherent aesthetic-political world-view: a neo-traditional world-view.12

The Neo-Traditionalist World-View: Political Problems, Economic Interests, and Social Groupings.

In order to better understand this intersection of ideas, it is important to first situate the intellectuals themselves, and the context out of which these ideas were drawn together in a neo-traditionalist constellation. This world-view, a set of very common if not unanimous preoccupations among this group, was

12 The term aesthetic-political is here used as David Carroll employs it in his study *French Literary Fascism*. Carroll’s work identifies the crucial way in which aesthetic concepts structured the cultural and political writings of proto-fascist and fascist French intellectuals. Carroll, *French Literary Fascism*, p. 20, passim. This critique of fascism as the aestheticization of politics itself draws on the precedent of Walter Benjamin’s paradigmatic study of modernism and politics, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” As he puts it: “this is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art.” Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” translated by Harry Zohn in *The Continental Aesthetic Reader* (Routledge, 2000), p. 337.
influenced by shared political, economic, social and cultural concerns: some of
the more common and central ones included their shared celebration of
*revanchisme* inspired by the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune; the literary
crises of the late nineteenth century and their influence on the proliferation of
both avant-garde movements and fears of foreign cultural contagion; the
significance of the republican university as both a meeting site for these figures
and source of their anxiety about France’s degeneration; and finally, the role of
the transportation revolution upon their identities as intellectuals moving with
increasing facility across national, regional and colonial boundaries. Each of these
influences help to better situate the intellectuals who helped manufacture neo-
traditionalism as a set of aesthetic-political ideas for the French colonial
modernity, a set of aesthetic-political ideas which the remainder of the chapter
examines.

**Political Crises and Reaction**

It had been only after the Franco-Prussian War, retroactively constructed
as a break with French grandeur and conflated with the inauguration of the Third
Republic, that the term avant-garde itself migrated from being a descriptor of
advanced political formations, to describing taste-making cultural and aesthetic
modernist movements.\(^\text{13}\) Bertrand’s own experiences as a youth in Lorraine were

\(^{13}\) See Venita Datta, *Birth of a National Icon*, p. 18; see also Renato Poggioli’s classic *The Theory of the
Avant-garde*, passim.
deeply impacted by the Franco-Prussian War and its outcome—a defeat he conceived as humiliation, with the loss of a portion of Lorraine territory including his home in Metz. He remembered his youth, as fellow Lorraine native Barrès put it, “under the eye of the barbarians,” in other words, the German invaders and occupiers. As Hans Kohn argues, prior to the Franco-Prussian War, Germany was not always seen as the principal enemy of France. Michelet for instance did not see Germany as the enemy, so much as Russia, and as with Louis Blanc, England above all. “England was to him ‘l’anti-France,’” in its modern commercialism or capitalist modernity. This was a period of intense national rivalries within Europe and with imperialist expansion in South Eastern Europe and overseas. With Russia taking the place of Turkey, and England succeeding Spain, “Hugo like Michelet and other French intellectuals looked for Franco-German cooperation to form a ‘third force’ to save Europe and civilization from Atlantic commercialism and Eurasian barbarism.” Following the example of de Staël, they saw Prussia as an intellectual and civilized nation. According to Kohn, the invasion would change French nationalists’ revanchiste gaze upon the eastern frontier—now the threshold of an often exoticized barbarism. There were many continuities between the Second Empire and Third Republic. However, the establishment of the Third Republic came to signify a traumatic break from tradition for many intellectuals. And it was to tradition, 

whether in France’s non-Germanic Latin identity, or its classical or Catholic heritage, that many intellectuals eventually turned or returned, particularly the neo-traditionalist members of the École Romane and the Naturistes, but also later Symbolists as well.

The symbolic weight attached to the Franco-Prussian War as well as the Commune was significant. So were the individual experiences in the face of German conquest and occupation in this period—such as those of Bertrand in German-occupied Lorraine. These political incidents, along with imperial conflicts like those at Fashoda and the Moroccan crises, and the string of publicized single-named scandals and affairs that defined French political culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, ranging from Boulanger, Panama, Dreyfus to Stavisky, kept this anxiety of political corruption and imminent collapse of the Third Republic fresh in the pages of newspapers and journals—all of this frequently by the pens of neo-traditionalists themselves.

The Franco-Prussian War and the Commune produced different reactions in different French people. There was no single commemoration of these events. But neo-traditionalists agreed with Catholic conservatives and monarchists, among whom there would be even greater rapprochement after the 1905 legislation separating church and state, that these foundational events of the Third Republic were an affliction visited upon the nation itself. For some, perhaps none more so than Maurras, this was one of the clearer manifestations of
a long nineteenth century which had deracinated the French from their ‘authentic’ Greco-Latin roots of reason, tradition and humanism, a misdirected century diverted by the French Revolution and further tarnished by a feared socialist atavism. And thus the Franco-Prussian War came to focus neo-traditionalists’ and other intellectuals’ ire both at the foreign barbarian, but also the internal signs of decadence and weakness.

Economic Crises and Literary Production

If the political events of the early 1870s were recurring preoccupations of this group, it was not the crisis of German invasion or the bloody siege on the Commune that led to the astonishing production of hundreds of journals from the late 1870s into the new century. This was a time which saw the birth of the modern intellectual in its most restrictive sense of the term—that is, as a performative identity taken up by artists and writers seeking to sway public opinion in France and later elsewhere. Venita Datta has recently produced a much needed and wide-ranging English-language study on the content of avant-garde journals and on the formation of the elite identity of ‘intellectual’ in the Belle Époque. She has convincingly established that the notion of the ‘intellectual’ shortly preceded, rather than followed, the Dreyfus Affair with which it has long

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16 ‘Intellectuals’ in the more general sense, that is as knowledge-producers seeking to sway (or educate) politically-engaged citizens or people on matters deemed relevant to them as a public, were of course not invented by the French. They appear with much greater frequency, in an earlier and more global history — they did not, however, have the good fortune to patent the title.
been tied. Her definition of the intellectual as a performative identity of an independent and politically engaged artist or scholar, is a very workable if only partial one.\(^\text{17}\) Christophe Charle, a social historian of ideas drawing theoretical inspiration from Pierre Bourdieu’s earlier examination of the avant-garde, offers another important component in how he defines the intellectual as “a secular professional producing and shaping symbolic goods that are the basis of their autonomy—not only for their created works, but of their political engagements—in relation to the State or Church apparatus.”\(^\text{18}\) This definition (though certainly more unwieldy than Datta’s) arrives closer to another of these intellectuals’ anxieties: that as cultural workers in an “industrialized” literary field, these aristocrats of creativity were becoming literary “proletarians.”\(^\text{19}\) Rather than one of triumph, the pose of intellectual also reflected increasing social and economic stresses upon writers, artists or scholars taking up this mantle.

Why this new identity of avant-garde intellectual, and what did it have to do with the explosion of books and journals in the Third Republic? Charle has painstakingly investigated the factors associated with the creation of this identity, as well as the related conditions surrounding the increase in publications. Factors involved in the production of so many books and journals in this period included

\(^{17}\) Datta, *Birth of a National Icon*, p. 9. Datta cites Pascal Ory, Jacques Julliard, and Michel Winock as historians who have helped fashion this definition of the intellectual.

\(^{18}\) Charle, *Crise littéraire*, p. 16.

the dramatic decrease in costs of production, the gradual easing of state
censorship (except in regards to the theatre), copyright reforms, and the creation
of a large reading public. On the latter, Charle observes that the increases in
readership actually preceded republican reforms in education that increased
access to post-secondary education; instead, the increase in readership was rather
due to the initiative of French people who attempted to gain access to elite
culture and status through education, literacy and the literary consumption.

However, following decades of expansion in French publishing, the late
1880s saw a serious crisis develop in the midst of global recession. There was a
contraction of the literary market that, for Christopher Charle, led around 1890 to
a “phenomenon of overproduction” — or a catastrophic “Krach des libraries” as
contemporaries anxiously (and exotically) called it. By the 1890s there had
developed what Charle has called the “Literary crisis in the age of Naturalism”: a
crisis of overproduction of print: two-thirds of books produced in 1891, 1892 and
1893 were net losses for editors. The result was a price-war between editors, and
authors subsequently lost some of their recent relative gains in autonomy and
revenue. This spurred increasing competition between different avant-garde
movements seeking to stake a claim to an audience in a more precarious literary
marketplace. This was an atrophied literary marketplace, in which the number of
novels published annually would take many years to regain pre-1890 levels.20

20 Charle, La Crise littéraire à l’époque du naturalisme. As Datta puts it, “[a] great many writers, not
only of the avant-garde, feared the decline in status of the writer and the rise of an ‘intellectual
And this crisis in a contracting publishing market occurred at the same time as other compounding pressures upon the literary marketplace. There were ever-increasing numbers of university-educated young people in Paris seeking a life of letters. And Venita Datta observes, “the literary milieu at this time was in part fed by disenchanted members of the university population who could not find other jobs.”

But this was also a period of more translations of popular ‘foreign’ works: Slavic literatures like Dostoevsky, classic Arabic literature like *A Thousand and One Nights*, or German philosophers like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were increasingly popular. It was not only that a saturated market of literary entrepreneurs—a new intellectual class—had developed that was no longer a consolation for the increasing numbers of university graduates unable to find work teaching at the most prestigious schools, but something of a hysteria developed about the ‘importation’ of foreign literatures in this context. Although some of the Parnassians were fascinated with adapting German, Scandinavian, Slavic and Arabic literatures into a French milieu, other artists were increasingly proletarian.’ Many resented the emergence of a new elite, promoted by the republican university. For some, this fear led to anti-Semitism. According to historian Robert Byrnes, the determining factor of the anti-Semitism of professional men was economic: ‘The depression which struck the French publishing industry in 1890 left behind also a generation of ‘frustrated aesthetes,’ of men who had grown to manhood in the 1870s and 1880s with visions of following the paths of Zola, Verne, Sainte-Beuve, Taine... to fame and fortune.’” Datta, *Birth of a National Icon*, p. 99. Datta is careful to point out that one can not easily trace individual trajectories along this economic path to anti-Semitism in particular, but the crisis was nonetheless a pivotal event, and lasting reality, for the avant-garde.

21 Datta, *Birth of a National Icon*, p. 35.
dismayed. Neo-classicism, or as it was often called in this period, the ‘Classical Renaissance’, was in part a circling of wagons amidst the threat of an atrophied reading public looking further afield than national literatures. This was a classical revival, that if motivated by a desire to regenerate a decadent populace, also had the advantage of attempting to shut out foreign competition for the affective labor, or loyalty, of French bourgeois readers in a contracting literary marketplace. One also sees here the expression of a French cultural racism, in which reproduction between people of different races was seen as less a threat than their insinuation of a foreign contaminating culture. In one of Maurras’ most famous essays from the early 1890s, a manifesto of the École Romane appropriately titled Barbares et Romans, he argued on the one hand that “French literature will not be reborn in commerce with the Slavic spirit, nor the German spirit, nor the English spirit. The barbarians can introduce new blood into a race, but not a new rhythm.” Intertwined with the Revanchisme against Germany, these economic fears were an important background to the call for the classicist revival of the 1890s—it was a xenophobia for foreign competing literatures that would, in Maurras’s hands, translate easily enough into a xenophobic political program during the Dreyfus Affair.

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22 For example, the manifestos of the Naturistes, the École Romane, and other post-Symbolist programs are explicit in purging French letters from the influence of foreign literatures. See Bonner Mitchell’s useful Les Manifestes littéraires de la Belle Époque (Seghers, 1966).
These economic strains and pressures were important defining characteristics of the avant-garde. Their position relates to one of the seeming paradoxes of the avant-garde and intellectual elite: a greater autonomy was staked out for these new professional fashioners of public taste, but within an ever-multiplying number of aesthetic movements and schools seeking to differentiate each from the other. They were not isolated from other political and cultural organizations in Greater France, but they were participants from a particular position in society—as Jerrold Seigel has detailed, acting the bohemian shadow to the French bourgeoisie.\(^{24}\) Charle stresses that this subculture demonstrated a relative exclusivity in relation to other social groups. According to Charle, “when literature was more strongly and directly dependent upon the rest of social life, a literary group had no reason for being. The writer was the spokesperson of a social, religious, political or ideological group, or at least tried to play this role.”\(^{25}\) The very presence of an avant-garde demonstrated its members’ divorce from the social groups of which artists and writers had previously been members. Datta notes that common to all avant-garde, “was the fear of a tyranny of the majority, of being overtaken by the ‘crowd’, be it proletarian or lower middle class.”\(^{26}\)

The avant-garde might dispute amongst one another, but it was amongst each other that they wrote, published, and lived much of their lives. Just as these

\(^{24}\) Seigel, *Bohemian Paris*.
\(^{25}\) Charle, *La crise littéraire*, p. 18.
\(^{26}\) Datta, *Birth of a National Icon*, p. 82
literary movements collectively attempted to distinguish themselves from preceding (or contemporaneous) movements, such as Symbolists from Parnassians, Romantics from Symbolists, or Naturistes from Romantics, individuals within each movement attempted to distinguish themselves, but each citing the other, each arguing with each other, in a proliferating debate among an exceedingly small cadre of French society. Members of the avant-garde wrote in different reviews together and many married into each others’ families. These and other quotidian experiences had a hand in providing them similar viewpoints on a broad range of political and social issues, overshadowing even particular political positions they might take up during the Dreyfus Affair—as Datta’s important work has extensively shown. The Dreyfus Affair was not only an internal struggle among intellectuals for power, but also “an opportunity for intellectuals to assert their place in society with regard to other social groups.” For Datta, “that Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards shared a common vocabulary meant that both sides agreed that contemporary French society suffered a malaise caused by the emergence of mass democracy and industrialization.”

Social Crises and Republican Education

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29 Datta, *Birth of a National Icon*, passim.
Society was palpably changing, but so too were the personal itineraries of students who would largely compose the ranks of the Parisian avant-garde, as they moved from the provinces to Paris and sometimes back again. Parvenus provincials, arriving for studies or for a career in letters, like Maurras, Barrès and Bertrand, found a Paris in full transformation and a world astonishingly different from that of their peripheral towns and cities. Maurras, educated with a Greek and Latin classical education in a seminary in Provence, was repulsed by the cosmopolitan barbarism he found on his arrival in Paris. Parisian universities taught German philosophy that was symptomatic of a feared degeneracy of French classical purity. Under the tutelage of Comte’s writings, positivism, coupled with modernist and neo-classical aesthetics, would remain an important ideological component to Maurras’s politics, but the invasion of German thought, especially neo-Kantianism, and the presence of Jewish teachers in pedagogical French institutions, came to revolt him as a sickness debilitating the intellect of the nation. In Barrès’ Les Déracinés, the fictionalized lycée instructor Bouteiller is a neo-Kantian and republican, embodying the republic’s institutionalized deracination of the French from their traditions and patrimony, through public

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32 On Maurras’s early years, the most in-depth study is Victor Nguyen’s Aux origines de l’Action française. Intelligences et politique à l’aube du XXe siècle (Fayard, 1991); see also Albert Detaille, Maurras en Provence (Marseille: Edition du Centenaire, 1968); Alphonse Roche, “Les Idées Traditionalistes en France de Rivarol à Charles Maurras.”
instruction in the schools and universities. For young elites often moving from the provinces it was in and around the French universities, scholarly societies, cafes and literary circles in the metropole that ideas of French imperialism and its relation to fin-de-siècle French politics and aesthetics were discussed and expressed, such as in the works of Grandes Écoles professors like Gaston Boissier, Gabriel Tarde, and Ferdinand Brunetière, even before an eventual ‘archicube’, or alumnus of the École Normale Supérieure, like Bertrand would arrive in Algeria to teach at a lycée in the colony.

Bertrand was one of many university elites who had come to be trained as instructors, but hoped to be a writer. But with employment prospects for “men of letters” increasingly tenuous over the course of the 1880s and 90s, and with the massive expansion in secular schooling, archicubes were then sent back ‘out’ again, outwards to provincial and colonial cities and towns to find work as

33 In case one misses the didacticism in the novel proper, Barrés’s 1904 preface announces to the reader “I denounced the conquering and utopian spirit of a Bouteiller who descends upon indigenous populations like a despotic administrator crossed with a fanatical apostle; I noted why Kantianism, which is the official religion of the University, deracines people’s spirits.” L’Homme Libre, Le Culte du Moi II (2008), p. 17.

34 Scholars shaped academic inquiry to fit their concerns about France’s cultural and political position in the face of competing powers and about France’s overseas conquests. Boissier, Tarde and Brunetière were each academics at the Parisian Grandes Écoles in the 1880s or 1890s who fin-de-siècle intellectuals studied, or in Bertrand’s case studied under, while at university. Interestingly, each of these scholars not only defined Frenchness in relation to French imperialism, but simultaneously to France’s Roman imperial past. In other words, these and other scholars fashioned Frenchness out of a contemporary matrix of colonialism and classicism which would also become the stacked lenses through which the avant-garde saw modernity. To give only a few examples, Gaston Boissier’s influential archaeological study of Roman North Africa repeatedly suggests that France must better familiarize itself with its Roman predecessor in order to meet the challenges of contemporary Greater France. See Bossier, L’Afrique Romaine. Promenades archéologique en Algérie et Tunisie (Paris: 1912); Gabriel Tarde’s “L’Impérialisme,” La Renaissance Latine, 15 July, 1902.
teachers according to the needs of a centralizing and imperialist French state—while also seeking to maintain their connections to the avant-garde scene in Paris, whether by re-creating these subcultures elsewhere, or remaining in correspondence with colleagues. Regional cultural institutions like the Félibriges were important points of contact among avant-garde intellectuals in the provinces. But no institution was more important than the expanding university system and particularly the Parisian Grandes Écoles of Paris. Many of the new cultural elites of the 1880s and 90s were students in the elite lycées and then universities who would become members of avant-garde aesthetic movements in Paris, as well as in and around academies and universities in provincial centers like Montpellier and Aix. It was around the universities, in particular on the Left Bank, that the publishing houses of the avant-garde, as well as many of the cafés they frequented, were also found. The elite Parisian lycées of Condorcet, Henri IV, Louis-le-Grand, as well as university institutions like the École Normale Supérieure and the Sorbonne, were the original meeting places of many if not most of the avant-garde—who would often meet again and consolidate these contacts in the provinces and colonies. André Gide, who had met Pierre Louÿs at the École Alsacienne, would then contribute with future prime minister Léon Blum in putting together a student journal while at Lycée Henri IV. Gide and

35 Datta, Birth of a National Icon, pp. 34-35; See also Christophe Charle La crise littéraire; Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, les intellectuels en France de l’affaire Dreyfus à nos jours, pp. 47-60; Fritz Ringer, Fields of Knowledge: French Academic Culture, 1890-1920, in Comparative Perspective (Cambridge University Press, 1992) is an excellent comparative study of debates about French and German universities.
Blum passed the same halls that recent alumni and future neo-traditionalists and Action Française allies Louis Bertrand and André Bellessort had roamed together. Most of the founding members of the Naturisme movement, Saint-Georges de Bouhélier, Maurice Le Blond, Jean Longuet, and Louis Rouart, were all schoolmates at the lycée Condorcet. The Parisian avant-garde published in a number of inter-related if sometimes mutually hostile reviews, which were almost all published, except for the La Revue Blanche, within a few blocks on the Left Bank.

**Travel Itineraries in a Greater France**

Paris was complex, dynamic, and socially and culturally fragmented. It would fascinate and repulse many university students who arrived from the provinces with their visions of a spectacle of possibility as well as of decadence, of a spectacle of over-acculturation, consumption, and the transformation of a traditional provincial society left behind as they arrived at one of the important global nexus of colonial modernity. A number of modernist writers and poets of the period, Louÿs, Bertrand and perhaps most notably Barrès, were deeply influenced by Charles Baudelaire’s own urban journeys to the threshold between bourgeois life and working class and immigrant zones of supposed alterity.  

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They note in their works the membrane between a youthful elite’s university-centered lives, centered on the Left Bank, and working class and immigrant neighbourhoods. The avant-garde pursued their own bohemian journeys of discovery and anxiety, as they would in the colonies or other ‘foreign’ lands, fashioning themselves alongside and against people with their own very real, though often very different, experiences.38 But they would be reduced in many of these artists’ representations to either symbolic or realist types: in Paris, the seductive Gitane or Roma, the working-class tough; and in their tourist itineraries in Algeria, the veiled Muslim woman, or the rough Spanish settler — these were racialized, gendered and classed types who, as we see in chapter three, were inscribed into the social novels of the late nineteenth century, such as Bertrand’s, synthesizing demographic and sociological studies of the time that were themselves influenced by literary tropes. It is a paradox of the period that while it was ever-increasingly easy for intellectuals to move across frontiers, the identities of people whom they represented seemed to become more formulaic and quarantined to a specific locale, or more ‘scientifically’ determined, even among the greatest critics of literary Naturalism.

To understand the ways in which these intellectuals constructed authentic identities within the French nation, region or colony, means appreciating the ways in which their own identities were defined as almost constantly mobile —

38 See Jerrold Seigel, Bohemian Paris, passim.
one might say cosmopolitan if it were not such an epithet among neo-
traditionalists reacting to the decadence of colonial modernity. Key avant-garde
intellectuals like Barrès or André Gide moved relatively effortlessly across Paris,
regions like Provence, and the French overseas territories thanks to the
steamships and railways that linked this modernizing French nation. It was a
French modernity seemingly divorced from the traditions that many of these
intellectuals experienced as a lack, or a childhood nostalgia, which they sought to
reinvent through their works. These works often mirrored their own
transnational and infranational journeys. If the term “intellectual” was coined in
the fin-de-siècle to refer to a category of “men of letters” taking public stands
(and it was indeed overwhelmingly if not exclusively the publicizing of men’s
tastes and fantasies), these figures at the forefront of intensifying fin-de-siècle
debates about French modernity also took upon themselves identities related to
tavel—besides obviously being tourists inasmuch as they traveled within
France, across Europe and in the colonial Mediterranean. They were ‘flâneurs’—
or peregrinators across the classed and racialized frontiers within cosmopolitan
and modern cityscapes dividing different neighbourhoods. But the critic Victor
Segalen also saw many members of this generation of intellectuals as what he
called ‘exotes’, a term he coined for the avant-garde flâneurs of French empire—or
tourists who found themselves rooted only en route across classed and racialized
imperial frontiers—like Barrès’s characters, in a state of continuous becoming. In
Segalen’s notebooks, he identified Bertrand as one of the leading voices of this new phenomenon of the exote. Bertrand, like Barrès, sought to épater la bourgeoisie in his prose portraits of his native land and foreign countries, even while Bertrand was looking for a comfortable inn in which to write his works of French conquest, or Barrès was asking Bertrand for the nicest hotels to stay in on his journey to Beirut. Barrès and Bertrand meditated on national, regional and colonial identities from the comfort of museums, hotels, with guides, or on vacations, and through other middle-class institutions of this colonial modernity; André Gide like Bertrand expressed a sexual and social liberty in his works on colonial North Africa, along the well-worn routes blazed by an expanding European middle class feeding a burgeoning taste for the colonial sex tourism trade. In Gide’s case, the deeply lyrical if orientalised ‘nomadism’ he championed in his North African novels was, if an appropriation of a clichéd exoticism of nomadic Arabs, at least as much a displacement of the itinerant banality of fin-de-siècle European consumer society and tourism that lay on the surface of so many of these narrated journeys of national, regional and colonial becoming. Often the more fantastic or inspiring the cultural fantasy, the more

40 Bertrand’s representations of Algerian women were most often of mendicants or sex workers. In his first impressions of Algeria shared with Gasquet he wrote, “the mysterious beauty of the sacred prostitutes of Asia: all these women laying in wait, like cattle on the street, for the visit of the Spouse, inclined me to meditate and feel a sense of piety, like in Church.” Bertrand, Terre de Ressurection, p. 32.
everyday and banal was the social reality behind its construction.\footnote{For more on tourism’s crucial role in the construction of an authentic France, colonial Algeria, and French bourgeois subject, see the outstanding dissertation by Patrick Young, “The Consumer as National Subject: Bourgeois Tourism in the French Third Republic, 1880-1914” (Columbia, 2000); for more on French tourism in the nineteenth-century, yet another classic essay by Eugen Weber is his chapter “Curists and Tourists” in France: Fin de Siècle, pp. 177-194.} Almost invisible in Bertrand’s notebooks are the innkeepers, carters, and personal servants who were the actual gatekeepers for Bertrand’s glances into a world of working-class, immigrant and/or Algerian societies that would be transformed by his art into narratives of colonial regeneration of the French race.

One of the necessary conditions in both the fashioning of the Paris of the Belle Époque and the conquest of nineteenth-century North Africa, was the modernization and reorganization of transportation, in Algeria and France, in the countryside and cities. Under the Second Empire, Paris was further cemented as the social and administrative center of a centralizing French bureaucratic network. At this epicenter, narrow streets were replaced with broad Hausmann boulevards bordered by stately housing for a growing middle class and increasing urban traffic. At the same time as trade increased through the ‘Porte d’Orient’ of Marseille and shipping companies turned their attention to bourgeois travel across the Mediterranean, tourist guides and organizations like the Touring Club were marketing the Côte d’Azur as a bucolic retreat from urban anomie. Famed geographer and colonial adventurer Onésime Reclus’s celebrated studies of France as well as Algeria were sometimes commissioned by the Touring Club itself. Travel across the Mediterranean, to Naples, Cairo, Jerusalem,
Athens, Barcelona, Granada, or Algiers, was no longer recounted in the romantic and heroic tales of Chateaubriand or Théophile Gautier, but in middle-class tourist narratives, written with guidebook, or even better a well-thumbed Chateaubriand, in hand. These tourist geographies explored by Maurice Barrès, Charles Maurras, André Gide, Isabelle Eberhardt, or later Albert Camus, were already over-written by the weight of a French classical tradition. How could a French intellectual end their classical pilgrimage at the supposed source of Western Civilization atop the Acropolis without reference to Renan? How could Barrès and Bertrand ‘discover’ Moorish Spain without already assuming the precedence of a Baedeker tourist guide? — guidebooks which Bertrand and Barrès each critiqued on their journeys even while pretending to discover this region for their readership.42

Everywhere they visited by means of mass transportation was by definition already overwritten by precedent. By the later nineteenth century, regular steamship runs crossed the Mediterranean, and the extensive railroad system built in France helped transform public conceptions of the national and foreign within a modern economy and consumer society. A prodigious increase

42 It is not too difficult to find tourism imagery proliferate in neo-traditionalist writings — to the point of operating as a set of explanatory metaphors. For example, Bertrand writes of Gobineau: “This philosopher diplomat and traveller, this Norman and feudalist gentleman, is barely known by us except for his nebulous ethnology. We only want to consider him the theoretician who, to the great scandal of our self-love of the Latins, dogmatically claimed the preeminence of German races. We forget that he not only wrote his celebrated Traité sur l’inégalité des races humaines and other didactic works, but novels, lyrical poems, dramas, and travel narratives. All this, as Baedeker says of certain hotels, can be appreciated in different ways.” Bertrand, Le Sens de l’ennemi, p. 250
in railroad construction, especially in the years 1852-1856, opened new markets in the provinces and colonies, and private banking was introduced in France as well as Algeria which also facilitated trade. Of course, these changes were not identically experienced across these colonial frontiers. For instance, liberal reforms of property and finance resulted in the dispossession of Algerians from the traditional commons and the marginalization of charity-based economic institutions—changes which had occurred in France less rapidly and less severely. Colonial economic reforms, like those proposed by Auguste Warnier and later Gabriel Hanotaux, whatever their intention, would serve to transfer wealth and property to the settlers, and exacerbate the catastrophic famines specific to the Algerian side of the colonial divide. What in France was a process of assimilating regional polities, was in Algeria a system of racialized dispossession and segregation. Trade routes in Algeria were also transformed with routes running increasingly south to north, to ship agricultural and other commodities back to France as part of the project for developing (literally, ‘mettre en valeur’) Algeria according to French needs. The cold economic equations regarding the actual profitability of colonial administration were occulted in popular and elite cultural representations of an expanding, glorious France. Hanotaux’s celebration of a regenerated France in L’Énergie française ended with a

celebration of Algeria’s cultural significance as a source for inspiring a regenerated French nation. He was much more defensive in explaining the costs of the colonial venture to the public at large.\textsuperscript{45} Of course, as some fin-de-siècle critics of colonial policy were aware, colonialism was extremely profitable, but only to some, not necessarily to French people in general.\textsuperscript{46}

It was certainly not just in the writings of intellectuals, or even primarily in their writings, but in everyday popular culture that colonial conquest became normalized as an integral part of French identity. The celebration of colonial commodities was one way in which the conquest was normalized into the everyday lives of French people, this process of colonial commodification that had the simultaneous effect of defining French modernity itself.\textsuperscript{47} For example, in Paris the department stores and exhibitions promoted and advertised regional and exotic commodities from both supposedly archaic provinces and conquered territories, as authorities and management anxiously sought to control and manage the libidinal forces that they feared were unleashed in this consumer society, a new mediated and exoticist spectacle of French modernity that

\textsuperscript{45} Gabriel Hanotaux, \textit{L’Énergie française}, (Flammarion), pp.267-319; 333-367.
\textsuperscript{46} “Corporations, banking houses and settler producers achieved profitability by the utmost exploitation of cheap colonial manpower rather than by the pursuit of long-term infrastructure development or market diversification. The short-termism characteristic of these economic policies drew frequent criticism in colonial capitals and in Paris, but at no stage was a state-led programme of colonial development implemented for the empire as a whole.” Martin Thomas, \textit{The French Empire Between the Wars: Imperialism, Politics and Society} (UBC Press, 2005), p. 7.
\textsuperscript{47} Anne McClintock’s \textit{Imperial Leather} has an important discussion of commodity capitalism in the colonial era—in a specifically Anglo context. See McClintock, \textit{Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest} (Routledge, 1995).
Rosalind Williams aptly calls ‘the dream world of mass consumption’. These consumer fantasies were wedded to a modernizing and colonial economy, and at the same time papered over them with fantasies of possibility that were also further reinforced in the works of the avant-garde. In Michael Miller’s groundbreaking study of the Bon Marché and consumer society, he writes of how the Bon Marché could in its publicity offer “the sight of a vast Oriental museum... transporting the imagination to the sunny land of a thousand and one nights.” He writes further for the bourgeois child growing up in late-nineteenth-century France, the magical, the exotic, the fantastic, and the extraordinary were still the stuff of legendary figures, fairy-tales, and heroes of the French nation; but they had also become the stuff of department stores as well. Indeed fantasy and the Bon Marché could be entirely interwoven. One series portrayed a shipment of Bon Marché toys by desert caravan to Morocco.

This Paris transformed, of department stores, cafes, consumption and exhibitions, is only one facet of this city’s modernity, its most visible and perhaps even its most important in disseminating ideas of belonging to a Greater France.

However, it is important to note that Paris was the site of many modernities, or if one prefers, facets of a generalized globalizing modernity in this imperial age. It was home to distinct though inter-related national-cultural projects of modernity that many French elites, as well as contemporary critics, missed when inscribing

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Paris’ significance to a French national history alone. Just as French intellectuals like Bertrand sought to redefine French national identity while living in colonial Algiers, Paris was itself an important site in Arab, Turkish, and other modernities. Key Islamic modernists like Mohammed Abduh and Jamal al-din al-Afghani lived and worked in Paris when they published the important reformist journal *al-Urwah al-Wuthqa*. There Al-Afghani publicly debated Ernest Renan about the nature of science, religion and secularism in the modern era—as each of these icons of distinct modernities refined their own ideas, ideas that were crucial generators of French and Islamic ‘authentic’ identities, in disputation with each other. Parisian modernity was certainly much more complex and global than the simplified vision in which its cosmopolitan qualities were merely signs of French degeneration.

**Nation, Region, Colony**

These intellectuals of the French avant-garde were members of a highly mobile subculture that was hardly fixed to the Parisian Left Bank. If these neo-traditionalists cobbled together ideas of right-wing reaction, colonialism and avant-garde aesthetics, they did so in fantasies of three idealized French geographies they and their writings frequently traversed: the nation, region and colony. After all, these were people whose itineraries and identities often intersected these idealized geographies that composed the idea of Greater
The inter-related subjects of French nationalism, French regionalism, and French colonialism are key to understanding the development of French culture in the nineteenth century. If nation, region and colony can be seen as units of French identity in the modern period— that is French national, regional, and colonial identities—studies often treat them in isolation each from the other. However, they all drew upon neo-traditionalist aesthetic-political strategies because constructions of the nation, region or colony as authentic elements of France were often constructed by the very same people: the three icons of Latinité, or France’s classical heritage, Maurras, Barrès and Bertrand, were each important contributors to nationalist, regionalist and colonialist visions of France.

And these distinct geographies were seen by many contemporaries as integrated components of what made France French. Today the topics of nationalism, regionalism and colonialism certainly provide useful, discrete categories for historical investigation. But treating the development of national, regional and colonial identities in isolation often risks distorting the ways in which they were experienced by many different groups in this formative period, including intellectuals, and the role they had in constructing these different categories of Frenchness according to the same aesthetic-political strategies. This

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51 The term ‘idealized geography’ is used here to distinguish actual physical spaces one encounters, for instance, under one’s feet as a mountain range, beach, or field, from the ways in which these spaces were invested with significance as the privileged spaces of French notions of belonging: those of an idealized nation, region or colony. A classic exploration of the idealized geographies of France can be found in Nora’s edited multi-volume collection Les Lieux de mémoire (Gallimard, c. 1984-1992).
is one of the problems facing historians of ideas looking to the origins of French fascism in the fin-de-siècle. Rather than experienced in isolation, it was along the routes between these idealized geographies of nation, region and colony that the roots of French identity were refashioned in the modern period, in this period of colonial modernity in the metropole and conquered territories. It was in this context that fin-de-siècle French avant-garde writers would draw upon the fantasies of national and colonial regeneration, in an era of perceived decadence and dislocation, to redefine French identity. In short, they refashioned a modernist vision of France and the French, and in so doing fashioned themselves as its privileged and elite cultural architects at a time when writers themselves were increasingly anxious about their own social position in a more competitive literary market.

In this context, ideas of neo-classicism, race, conquest and reaction, co-mingled into a broad aesthetic-political project of regeneration by avant-garde movements seeking to remake France in their own idealized image. They wanted to rescue France from modernity by means of aesthetic modernism. This aesthetic-political framework and the particular social context of its architects, that is, the neo-traditionalist avant-garde, is the starting point for understanding French ultra-nationalism as a fin-de-siècle doctrine, and further, as we will see, how it was the basis for the construction of Algerian settler identity by colonial intellectuals like Bertrand and Camus, and later, how these ideas, incubated in
the colony, were in turn vehicled back to the metropole by these intellectuals, vehicled ideas that served to further reimagine French and Western identities in the post-war period.

National, regional and colonial fantasies of course overlapped, sometimes one was treated as a subset of another, but all were components of “Greater France” — the term widely used to describe the French in the metropole and overseas territories as a whole. Lebovics has noted the simultaneity but distinctiveness of nation, region and colony in these modern constructions of France. For instance, regarding regionalism and nationalism: “everyone has two pays: each has roots in his own petit pays and all share the destiny of eternal, potentially greater France.” But the colonies, and not just colonial exhibitions, were also crucial and overlapping components of representations of France, none more so than colonial Algeria. Today Algeria is often studied by Anglo-American

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52 National, regional and colonial identities might seem to be discrete categories, but historically they were more fluid in definition. In other words, they were not always fixed categories with fixed boundaries between them. The nation was often seen as containing both the regions and colonies within its own categorical limits. But republican patriotism could also be seen as quite distinct from identities in provincial and colonial territories — France might or might not, for instance, mesh with Provençal regionalists. Conversely, the regions could also be seen as ‘authentic’ France, a nation of localities, which embodied the values of the regional petite patrie, while what was advanced by republicans as a uniform patriotic national culture was instead presented as a usurping foreign-inspired one, emanating from a decadent Parisian elite and inculcated through its Jacobin schools. This was a view of many neo-traditionalist nationalists like Barrès, Maurras as well as Bertrand. The Algerian colony was part of France, and thus not a colony at all in the sense of being a different state from France, as since 1848, it was a national region with three départements. Algeria was, as David Prochaska best put it, “ingested but not digested,” into France. Prochaska, Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920 (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 137. But it was popularly seen as a distinct colony, its citizens referred to as colons, which was culturally becoming a French region through colonization. This was the dominant settler narrative advanced by Algerian settler intellectuals like Bertrand and Camus.

53 Lebovics, True France, p. 10.
scholars as a site of French colonialism—it was a colonie de peuplement, or settler colony, of France. It was in fact an occupied country—a country of Algerians occupied and settled by France. But for the French, its largest city Algiers was an integral part of the French nation: it also was the seat of what many settlers, including Albert Camus, saw as a French provincial region akin to Provence, and was politically a capital of one of the three largest French departments—all in Algeria. Re-envisioning colonial Algeria through an imported French regionalist lens was in part what Bertrand’s work provided later settler intellectuals, a strategy for assimilating the colony as French region that Peter Dunwoodie and Seth Graebner have each recently argued in separate works.54

But it was not only ideas of French regionalism that were applied to the colony. Ideas about French colonialism were also applied to representing the French regions. Colonial representations of the French regions frequently exoticized them as lands foreign to France, their people barbarians needing to be conquered and civilized, or alternatively noble savages.55 Of course, one can exaggerate the simultaneity of nation, region and colony in the lives and ideas of many people in this period. These divisions were certainly not experienced or imagined the same way by all French citizens and subjects. For example, not everyone moved between the physical geographies demarcated by socially

54 Peter Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria, p. 91, passim; Seth Graebner, History’s Place: Nostalgia and the City in French Algerian Literature (Lexington Books, 2007), pp. 32-41.
55 This is a recurring theme in Weber’s Peasants into Frenchmen. See especially the first and final chapters, “A Nation of Savages,” and “Civilization and Cultures,” pp. 3-22, 485-96.
constructed categories of nation, region, and colony with equal ease. For some people the frontiers between nation and colony, or what was proper to a region and the nation as a whole, were relatively rigid boundaries. Native Algerians who were legally French subjects were subjected to the apartheid colonial laws of the repressive Code Indigène. Among its many arbitrary powers granted to colonial authorities over the quotidian lives of Algerians, movement outside of one’s commune was policed and was a matter decided by administrative permission or requisition rather than individual or communal volition. Likewise, as the overwhelming majority of Algerians were subjects of the French nation rather than citizens, they were never quite French nationals—France thus often stood for assimilationist Algerian intellectuals like Ferhat Abbas and Rabah Zenati as a republican ideal across the sea which they juxtaposed with the reactionary realities with which settler society confronted them. Their vision of Greater France was one of surveillance, repression and segmentation—France stood in for that ideal which was never actually manifest to these intellectuals in French Algeria. But this sense of belonging shared among assimilationist Algerian intellectuals—who were either French citizens or subjects—was not at all the experience for other groups of intellectuals, in this case, the burgeoning subculture of—often Paris-educated—French intellectuals of the avant-garde.

Seeing the French avant-garde only through the context of Parisian modernity misses their specific history as a coherent subculture or loosely-
identified group. Isolating the histories of French avant-garde intellectuals according to discrete studies of the ‘cosmopolitan’ nation, ‘archaic’ region or ‘exotic’ colony—as the stereotypes in many of their works would have it—distorts the mobility of their frequently transnational and infranational lives. They were not, according to often self-constructed stereotypes, fixed permanently in the Café Flore. These intellectuals greatly profited from the development of state infrastructure over the course of the nineteenth century, both in the metropole and colony. They could and did, like middle-class tourists, slip between and among these ideational and legal components of Greater France as relatively freely and frequently as, for instance, commodities in this colonial modernity. In other words, like colonial commodities such as the wine cultivated in the expropriated Mitidja plains, they moved with remarkable frequency and efficiency between cities like Algiers, Marseilles and Paris—and Europe and the Mediterranean in general. To only examine one facet, or worse believe their own self-constructed stereotypes, misses the circulation and movement which ordered their fixed visions of France.

**Neo-Traditionalist Intellectuals and the Regeneration of France**

Avant-garde intellectuals desired the creation of new models of belonging in the national, regional and colonial French contexts. They aimed to culturally regenerate a politically decadent France and French people. But their models for
aesthetic-political regeneration were created in the image of their own reflection. Their project was made to order for a subculture of avant-garde intellectuals who traversed national, regional, and colonial boundaries as they began to see themselves as a coherent group in the fin-de-siècle. The same holds true for settler intellectuals, crisscrossing the Mediterranean, and of whom Bertrand, with the possible exception of Isabelle Eberhardt, would be counted amongst the brightest. As we see in Chapter Five, those who followed Bertrand’s generation among settler intellectuals continued to see themselves as Promethean manufacturers of colonial culture. Many historians have noted that to appreciate the influence of colonialism on French culture means not only turning to the colonies, but also to the French metropole itself. It was in the metropole that one can best appreciate the ways in which debates about colonial and national identities were framed by avant-garde intellectuals in particular, as they gathered in Paris for schooling or fame, and then spread themselves back across the frontiers of Greater France, often for employment or work. The specific subcultures of European intellectuals in Paris, the provinces or colonial Algeria shared more with their avant-garde cohorts in these different locales than they did with other people sharing their same specific geographies. In other words, settler avant-garde intellectuals were more like their Parisian counterparts than even other colonial elites. Certainly, settler intellectuals had more in common with their cosmopolitan brethren than with almost all other settlers, not to
mention colonized Algerians subject to French rule. A neo-traditionalist avant-garde helped fashion many of the modernist tropes of French authenticity—national, regional, and colonial—in this France of an imperial age. To understand the aesthetic-political formation of these identities means exploring with greater care the inter-related aesthetic origins of these identity formations—which owe much in the way they were manifested according to avant-garde aesthetics. Too often, examinations of settler culture, national culture, or regional culture are examined in isolation one from the other. But neo-traditionalist and colonialist social visions, as they have been commonly presented as coherent units of French national identity, are more effects of aesthetic-political fantasies by nationalist intellectuals coming out of the avant-garde than they are the work of rural peasants or colonial settlers. This is in no way to say that the poor of Paris, peasants in the Languedoc, or Oranois settlers did not draw together or divide themselves in a myriad of ways culturally, that they themselves defined themselves, but that the ways by which they were and remain represented in media over-represented by avant-garde intellectuals in this period (and thus over-represented in the surviving sources available to historians), means recognizing that many of the conventions which are considered authentic to these groups had an origin outside of their own discrete cultural affinities. To put it simply: taking the writings of avant-garde intellectuals as representative of French people falls into the very fantasy they constructed for their relatively elite audiences. That
elites have had a large hand in producing modern conceptions of authenticity in
the age of mass communications is almost as cliché in French and other modern
historiographies as the images of authenticity these elites produced were in the
media at the time. This has all been well covered before by excellent scholars,
whether in Anne-Marie Thiesse’s encyclopedic studies of ‘authentic’ regionalist
cultures as fashioned by the literary avant-garde or in David Prochaska’s study
of the cultural dialectic between settler cultural elites and settlers in Algeria.56 But
avant-garde intellectuals were not just an important component in the
manufacture of each of these differently situated identities—national, regional
and colonial; they were a human thread that runs through them and across
national, regional and colonial boundaries.

The battles between Parnassians and Symbolists, Symbolists and the École
Romane, Romanes and Naturistes, were obviously not the entire field of political
action and debate in France—and yet it might seem so within the confines of a
journal like La Plume. This fantasy was one of a public sphere of letters, organized
by a relatively small, overwhelmingly male, and, despite their diverse origins,
relatively socially homogeneous group of young French elites. Unsurprising that
contemporary scholars Gabriel Tarde and Gustave Le Bon, or Augustin Cochin
after them, would find that the major events of modern French history were
products of elite publicity, that were consumed by imitative masses—an

56 Anne-Marie Thiesse, Écrire la France; David Prochaska, “History as Literature, Literature as
History ”.
interpretation of French culture that continues to influence French historiography.  

The secret origins of what are often received today as authentic French culture or Algerian settler culture were as much products of a common avant-garde as they were of actual peasants in the French regions or migrant Europeans settling North Africa. To confuse this distinction is to confuse, for instance, a painting by Cézanne of peasants for peasant culture, or Gauguin’s paintings of Tahitians for Tahitians themselves. There is some overlap of course, but the canvas tells us much more about a specific subculture of avant-garde painters, of their conventions, their shared aesthetic commitments and indeed political affiliations. They looked beyond French modernity for symbols to focus a new French classicism. As Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer observes in *Cézanne and Provence*, the neo-traditionalist Gauguin represented for

the new generation of modernists in the 1890s… an enticing hybrid that riveted Parisian curiosity—both European and exotic, civilized and barbaric, mysterious and accessible, at once same and ‘other,’ here and ‘there’—he represented the archetypal symbolist prophet-leader whose superhuman powers would revitalize an exhausted modernism.  

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57 One needs to beware the temptation to read these avant-garde texts as if the audience they summon when they represent ‘authentic’ France is not in fact a conjured fantasy from their individual and subcultural perspective. T.J. Clark warned, “This brings us back to the problem of artist and public. I want to put back ambiguity into that relation: to top thinking in terms of the public as an identifiable ‘thing’ whose needs the artist notes, satisfies or rejects. The public is a prescience or a phantasy within the work and within the process of its production. It is something the artist himself invents, in his solitude—though often in spite of himself, and never quite as he would wish.” T.J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (University of California Press, 1999), pp. 14-15.

This apt summary of Gauguin could just as easily be applied to Bertrand’s literary canvases with their lyrical but primitivist visions of a regenerated settler society, and through them, a regenerated France. In fact, as Athanassoglou-Kallmyer notes in passing, Cézanne had many acquaintances in common with Louis Bertrand, especially their mutual Provençal friend the neo-traditionalist Occitan poet Jaochim Gasquet. These were not shared discourses in an abstract sense, but a world-view shaped in a common subculture. Their visions of rustic and rude authenticity, whether in Provence or in Algeria, even if in different media, had much in common with each other in regards to their aesthetic strategies for regenerating France. The complexities and distinct realities of ‘authentic’ French identities were homogenized and reproduced across different boundaries by this subculture of avant-garde intellectuals travelling across the frontiers of Greater France at this time—looking for ways to revitalize and refashion the decadent nation. This was a subculture of intellectuals who fashioned similar structures and strategies of identity within the boundaries they freely crisscrossed; in sum, the conventions by which they assigned authentic French, Provençal or Algerian identities in their works display similar aesthetic-political commitments specific to this subculture, rather than to the referent folk represented. The identities that they quarantined in their works as distinctly authentic to a specific locale shared much in the way they were constructed according to the techniques and preoccupations of these intellectuals often
moving across the boundaries of a French imperial modernity. So rather than rehearse what these national, regional, or colonial identities were, as many social, political and cultural historians have, we instead examine how these identities were redetermined by a specific subculture of avant-garde intellectuals, positioning themselves as cultural legislators. This subculture of avant-garde intellectuals who elaborated a neo-traditional world-view sought not only to describe these authentic French identities, but prescribe them according to their own preoccupations. Some preoccupations were idiosyncratic and individual to be sure. The use of the term world-view is not to suggest that they were interchangeable, but that many preoccupations were shared according to their common experiences, preoccupations that can be traced throughout these intellectuals’ works and manifestos. And as we have examined so far, these were often overlapping over mutually reinforcing political, economic and cultural concerns: they reflected fears of dislocation and degeneration, a striving for a new classicism and a new order in the chaos of modernity, by looking further afield to the provinces and colonies.

The neo-traditionalist quest to regenerate the roots of a decadent France was situated amidst these several overlapping cultural and social phenomena. Inasmuch as it celebrated a return to classical tradition, it was a reaction to the heterodox aesthetic excesses of their predecessors. In other words, earlier avant-garde experiments were painted as cosmopolitan and not truly French. This was
also a rhetorical position by which one could mint one’s own movement as ‘authentically’ French, by policing others for their rootlessness. It was for foreign-inspired excess that the Romanes repudiated the Symbolists, and that for which the Symbolists had already critiqued the Parnassians. The avant-garde was on the one hand remarkably diverse in its members’ interests, their work, and their talent. But like any other subculture, they shared many experiences, including broader political, economic and cultural phenomena, such as education, travel, work, and of course the anxious legacy of the Franco-Prussian War. In fact, they shared a great deal more than, for instance, the remarkable diversity of experiences often lumped under the social identity of the French peasant—an identity in no small part simplified and celebrated by neo-traditionalist avant-garde writers as the authentic Frenchman.

This was thus the social network, and the period of political and economic crisis, that introduced the avant-garde. This generation of the avant-garde, this generation of artists and writers which also increasingly took upon themselves the broader mantle of ‘intellectual’ thus shared exclusive experiences as well as general ones like the legacy of the Franco-Prussian War. For those not already in Paris, they shared in the move from the provinces to Paris whether for higher education or for employment in letters, they shared in the quotidian practices of writing for Left Bank publishers, in their attending cafés and salons, or with their frequent travels between Paris, the French provinces and the colonial
Mediterranean. The works of those avant-garde of the 1890s who would form a subculture of neo-traditionalist reaction, shared avant-garde, reactionary and colonialist preoccupations, preoccupations which reflected the world-view whence they came. These ideas would provide the grammar by which a French authenticity would be constructed in opposition to an orientalized barbarism in this era of colonial modernity.
Aesthetic-Political Strategies in a Colonial Modernity

Having explored some of the conditions surrounding and preoccupations of neo-traditionalists in the fin-de-siècle, we now turn to the ways in which their writings addressed these circumstances, and reworked French conceptions of self in a time of perceived decadence. Neo-traditionalist programs, manifestos, novels, essays and poems threaded together their ideas of avant-garde aesthetics, revanchiste reaction and colonialism. They did so in regenerative revisions of what they saw was a moribund French classicism. Neo-traditionalists presented themselves as guardians of this tradition but expressed it in modernist ways. Theirs was a neo-classicism that would putatively regenerate the nation not only by turning to the canon, but in a celebration of the lyricism of rural lands and provincial peasants, or in the conquest and ‘taming’ of colonies. To understand the aesthetic strategies neo-traditionalists proposed, it is first necessary to understand the ways they modified French classicism. French classicism was the obvious locus for debates of neo-traditionalist authenticity as it was an elite vision of French culture; in fact it was by definition the canon of French culture they learned in, ironically, the republican schools so many attended, and by which they sought to regenerate a decadent nation in their aesthetic-political fantasies. To understand these neo-traditionalist fantasies, and how they evolved through the works of Bertrand and Camus, we should examine how they sought
to understand France through the ideas of classicism, Latinité, decadence and regeneration.

**Fin-de-Siècle Classicism and Regeneration**

France’s classical heritage was a central problematic through which metropolitan and colonial categories of identity were produced and contested by elites. A regeneration of French politics was seen to be synonymous with a regeneration in French classical aesthetics. The problem of classicism and French identity is one that exhibits what Harold Mah calls a “cultural longue durée”, that is, it existed as a recurring if shifting debate over a long period of time. But this classicist problematic would demonstrate again and again inherent instabilities in its definition and expression:

> From the beginning, classicist subjectivity was characterized by contradictions, self-generated impediments, and seemingly inevitable backsliding. The most grandiose moment of classical subjectivity — its achievement of complete self-mastery in the regulation of sensation and the overcoming of time — was, for example, often experienced not just as an apotheosis but also as an affliction.⁵⁹

Mah observes that classicism, itself a highly gendered discourse in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, has often been presented in the historiography as synonymous in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with a cultural nationalism in Germany and republican politics in

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But by the late nineteenth century, the most vocal advocates of neoclassicism were anti-republican—the guardians of French culture were opposed to its existing political order. The most esteemed theorists of neoclassicism of this period, including Maurras, Barrès, Bertrand or Pierre Laserre were, with the exception of Ferdinand Brunetière, all neo-traditionalists—Brunetière’s position was more that of a university insider than member of an avant-garde movement. This shift is analogous to how by the early twentieth century, colonialism, conflated by Jules Ferry and others with republicanism, would increasingly be adopted by the far-right as an important component of their politics. Classicism or colonialism remained important components of French culture, but their combinations with other cultural components were rapidly shifting in this period to fit the concerns of intellectuals generally, and neo-traditionalists in particular.

Debates about France’s classical heritage were had in a number of scholarly fields, such as archaeology, literature and linguistics, but also among the avant-garde as well. Classicism was synonymous with French identity to many, if not most, intellectuals in the 1890s; but by the early years of the twentieth century, to the sometimes embarrassment of later French classicists, it was increasingly associated with the works of the arch-reactionary Maurras and the Action Française. French classicism was the cultural expression of Frenchness, and it was constructed in a series of supposedly foreign oppositions:

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60 Mah, *Enlightenment Phantasies*, p. 82.
classicism against romanticism, German ideologies, Jewish and Protestant ‘abstraction’, and perhaps most of all, the Orient as barbarous contamination.\footnote{Carroll, \textit{French Literary Fascism}, p. 75.}

All oppositions were signs of France’s decadence: a social and political reality of modern France codified and interpreted within a classicist political framework.

In \textit{Qu’est-ce que le classicisme?} (1965) Henri Peyre wrote that classicism is a problem that

\begin{quote}
is inevitably posed, sooner or later, to all criticism, all students, all cultured French people who reflect on the literature and the past of their country. It poses itself equally to all foreigners who, wishing to understand French culture in its essence, to assimilate it as much as possible, all too frequently encounter in classicism a difficult obstacle.\footnote{Peyre, \textit{Qu’est-ce que le classicisme?}, p. 9}
\end{quote}

For anyone unfamiliar with both the richness and limits of French classicism,

Peyre’s observation is instructive on three fronts. Peyre, one of the most famous French classicists of the mid-twentieth century, here argues that French classicism is, first, synonymous with “French culture in its essence,” and, second, that foreigners, even other classicists, are liable to be incapable of ‘really’ understanding it.\footnote{Ibid.} The third point Peyre makes in this passage, that classicism is inevitably posed as a problem for ‘cultured’ French people to work through as part of their identity, is a useful starting point in discussing the long-lasting influence of fin-de-siècle classicism: its importance in the establishment of essentialist notions of French identity in general, and its importance in Bertrand’s
colonial works, which are examined in succeeding chapters. In his panegyric to French classicism *Le classicisme français*, Peyre cannot but apologize for the neotraditionalist classicists of the late nineteenth-century like Maurras who “renounced one of the great virtues of true classicism—its universality.”

Considering his work’s title and his view of foreigners’ limited understanding of French classicism, this charge can be read at best as ironic, or as a symptom of Maurras’s continued renunciative legacy.

Peyre’s postwar formulation that classicism is synonymous with being French is not far off of arch-conservative Ferdinand Brunetière’s definition of classicism, made in the midst of the classical renaissance of the fin-de-siècle. Brunetière notes that, “What there is for us, for we French, is to be and to remain Latins: Latins in heart, Latins in morals, Latins in taste, Latins in spirit, Latins in language, and Latins in thought.” As with André Gide and most other French neo-classicists, civilization was conflated with the Greco-Latin. Classicism was civilization’s idiom, and was itself once Greek, then Roman, then French. The French had inherited it, had a particular affinity for it, and propagated it universally. To renounce classicism, and this Latin identity, was to renounce being French: “Gentlemen, I do not know if we can cease to be Latins, but what I have no doubt of is that we would cease at once to be French,” continues

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Brunetière’s student, Louis Bertrand, likewise argued that if France were to cease embodying the universal and humanist virtues of Western Civilization (rooted in Greco-Latin tradition) he would himself renounce France.  

It might seem surprising that a neologism like “classicism”, which only came into more popular usage at the close of the nineteenth century, is now in the twenty-first century one so strongly tied to the history of French identity, at least in its elite formulations. But this is a term that was not only tied to the study of classics and a classical aesthetics, but one that was also tied to a nationalist vision of French identity; a melancholic identity that was the fraying end of a long thread of identitarian filiations: a thread of evolving French identity which began with an aristocratic Greco-Roman past, continued on to the Age Classique of the Ancien Régime, and terminated in aesthetic and political reaction to the perceived decadence of the Third Republic. In other words, it was a term that sought to explain the contemporary confusion of French modernity. It was a term only recently in vogue in the 1890s because its doubled meaning was shaped by, and useful for, neo-traditionalists. In other words, it was a fixed site of national reflection, not a lieu de mémoire so much as the idiom by which such lieux de mémoires would even be identified or created, whether in the image of Greco-

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67 Ibid., p. 290.
69 Peyre, Qu’est-ce que le classicisme?, passim.
Roman antiquity or the seventeenth-century *Age Classique*. But classicism thus also referred to the entire identity of France itself—anything that was canonically French was classical *by definition*. Bertrand’s thesis, which we examine more closely in Chapter Three, is not the first time a French work had used the neologism ‘classicism’, but with its recent popularization in the 1890s, his dissertation was the first time this word appeared as the titular subject of a French work.70 However, we need to be careful not to assume the self-constructed view of neo-traditionalists, and avant-garde intellectuals generally, that these revisions of classicism were the product of these elites in reshaping a France distorted by its institutions. One of the definitions of a French classic is merely that which is fit to be taught in French schools and this was also the period in which *lycée* curricula were changed at the end of the century, so that ‘*classique*’ was no longer applied to the seventeenth-century authors alone, but also writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in the very period as Bertrand’s 1897 thesis reformulated classicism along these lines.71 Neo-traditionalists rhetorically positioned themselves against the university system, most famously with the 1911 polemic launched by Alfred de Tarde (son of sociologist Gabriel Tarde) and Henri Massis (another eventual neo-traditionalist


immortel of the Académie Française) under the collective pseudonym ‘Agathon’ entitled L’Esprit de la Nouvelle Sorbonne. But the neo-classicist revival was much broader, and part of the success of neo-traditionalism was that it succeeded in defining classicism in relation to itself, even if classicism was much more broadly accepted as the essence of French culture. Conservative scholars within the university like Alfred Fouillée had also also championed classicism against “the magnificently disordered literatures of England and Germany.” Henri Bergson may have been an intellectual opponent of Maurras and Sorel, but he like they assumed the importance of classical studies to understanding and ameliorating French civilization. Economist Paul Leroy-Beaulieu argued “that France would always be ‘an Athenian nation, drawing its superiority, even economically, from its qualities of elegance, finesse, distinction, and refinement.’ Like Bergson, he claimed that industrial producers, though not classically schooled, benefited from ‘living in a milieu’ shaped by classical studies.”72 Thus it is important not to mistake changes in definitions of classicism as ‘trickling down’ from the Revanchiste generation of neo-traditionalist intellectuals to a society they sought to shape against the republican university. Instead, they were elaborating a neo-traditionalist narrative of French culture and history that both challenged and


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complemented changes in the way they as French lycéens and universitaires were presented these issues from within the university itself.\textsuperscript{73}

As Henri Peyre has detailed, the term classicism was first introduced in Italian, then into French by Stendhal, but it was not used by contemporaries in the early nineteenth century who, ironically, considered it a lexical innovation. Of course, the idea of classicism predated the popularization of the term, just as affinities among francophones predated the invention of the term ‘francophone’ by Onésime Reclus in \textit{France, Algérie et colonies} in 1880. Classicism was developed as an idea largely in opposition to Romanticism.

‘Classicism’ and ‘Romanticism’ are two of the most vexing twinned terms to define in the French canon. Whatever these terms have become, to contemporaries in the nineteenth century, they were not even primarily understood as distinct temporal periods. In other words, the common definition of the eighteenth century as classical and the nineteenth as Romantic is a retroactive construction from the twentieth century that in fact owes much to neo-traditionalist formulations during the 1890s revival. For instance, Bertrand, in \textit{Fin du classicisme}, and Maurras, in his 1890s \textit{La Cocarde} essays on classicism, were drawing upon earlier debates about French classicism’s contested relationship to French romanticism. In this they were both influenced by Joseph Texte’s \textit{Jean-Jacques Rousseau et les origines du cosmopolitisme littéraire} (1895), again

\textsuperscript{73} Thiesse, “Decline of the Classical Age and the Birth of the Classics,” \textit{passim}.
part of a long line of debates about romanticism’s foreignness—but now drawn into 1890s debates about French revanchisme and conquering glory—in which the foreign had to be expunged from French identity. 74 The difficulty in defining these as fixed terms is in no way because of a lacking scholarship, but because these terms were already overdetermined in meaning in early nineteenth-century criticism. In short, they meant many things to many people. The difference lay between aesthetic (if certainly not always political) conservatives advocating a classic style, and romantics (certainly not always revolutionary) advocating for the freeing up of artistic conventions. Summing up their political positions is difficult given how subjective the terms were—more difficult even than with 1890s French intellectuals with these evolving terms fitting evolving political and social circumstances. A key change in early-nineteenth century debates about canonical French literature, as the French nation was being defined by artists and scholars, was the historicization of the term *classique*. The term *classique* had first appeared in French during the sixteenth century, along with the term *Latinité*. A *classique* author was later defined in the *Dictionnaire of the Académie Française* in 1694, as “an ancient author well approved, who works with authority in his subject matter.” *Classique* was the proper formal style in imitation of the ancients, such as in the works of Bossuet or Racine, champions of *les anciens* against *les modernes*. *Latinité*, another neologism of the period, referred to the proper use of

this ancient Latin style or form—in other words, it was a term of measure to
evaluate one’s grasp of these conventions. One could have a high or low style of
Latinité; or one could write a ‘classic’ work if it was according to conventions of
Greek or Latin order and measure. So ‘classic’ was not an historical period
situated in antiquity, but a style inspired by the ancients, with its own history of
querelles, between advocates of different poets, styles and periods. The classique
style, though thoroughly a part of a Revolutionary aesthetics, came to signify, by
the end of the Belle Époque, and thanks to the neo-traditionalists, the aesthetics
of the Ancien Régime. Classicism not only referred to the imitation of ancient
writers and artists from Greece and Rome, but also to seventeenth-century
literary ancestors of the Ancien Régime, like Bossuet and Racine, who predated
the republican revolution. Thus to work in a proper, classical style was to work in
the tradition of the seventeenth-century—with a strongly implied fellowship to
Royalism. Classical writing was thus by the late nineteenth century historically
doubled, situated both in antiquity, and in the glory of France’s seventeenth-
century imitation of these classics. A modern classic writer was one working in a
doubled tradition of antiquity and the seventeenth century—a tradition which in
essence defined Maurras’ and many neo-traditionalists’ ideas of French culture
and patrimony, one that excluded the French Revolution of the eighteenth
century, Romantic innovation in the nineteenth century, and foreign contagion.75

75 Quand les Francais ne s’aimaient pas: chronique d’une renaissance 1895-1905 (Nouvelle Librarie
Nationale 1916); Pierre Lasserre, Le romantisme français; essai sur la revolution dans les sentiments et
They in turn redefined the writers of the previous aesthetic movement, like early Symbolists, as Romantic, regardless of their own profound interests in renovating classical style.

Hippolyte Taine, whose deterministic theories of literature and character shaped later novelists ranging from Zola to Barrès to Bertrand, and whose history of the *Ancien Régime* was a significant thesis on the French classical heritage, did not use the term classicism in his influential work. Nor did Fustel de Coulanges in his study of the *Cité Antique*. It only achieved greater use in the 1890s, for reasons particular to the neo-traditionalist revival of the period. So by then, the idea of classicism as the imitation of tradition also took on specific valences appropriate to the social, cultural and political context of 1890s, during which French scholars and avant-garde writers found use for reintroducing this term, as they sought to define and connect the complementary categories of literature, the French race, and civilization to the history of France from the seventeenth century on—a reactionary counter-narrative to the Republican catechism taught in the classroom, and against the proliferation of foreign literatures. So by then *revanchisme*, classicism, and anti-republicanism began to become conflated, if not confused. To understand how in flux classicism was in this period, it is important to work backwards and forget the success Maurras’s École Romane aesthetic movement had in defining classicism as their exclusive...
domain in the early twentieth century, and how implicated it was in national and ethnic notions of national degeneration and a Latin race.

**Degeneration**

If classicism was the salve for modernity’s ills, explored by neo-traditionalists along the imperial routes of a Greater France, decadence was its prognosis. As Venita Datta has shown, decadence was a leitmotif of avant-garde writing in the fin-de-siècle, and a general prognosis of French military, demographic, and cultural decline. Paris was a rapidly expanding economic and cultural center; it was also seen by many intellectuals as the geographic center of European decadence and decline—the province and especially the colony, by contrast, providing conceptual geographies of regeneration. Decadence is a difficult term to define, signifying both a surfeit of civilization and a descent into barbarism. Decadence, as sign of a Third Republic polity, was a composite of different discourses: hygienic discourses of purity and infection, medical studies on neurasthenia, demographic anxieties, and nineteenth-century debates defining classicism and romanticism in relation to cultural decline—these aesthetic debates were also tied to classicist models of political constitution going back at least to Aristotle’s *Politics.*

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or politics, has encoded as part of its very structure a model of degeneration and regeneration, always latent though manifest in certain periods more than others. Spinoza and Hobbes had described the decline or decay of political bodies, whether of the church or state, using metaphors of disease, gangrene and parasite. Voltaire had famously said of contemporary aesthetics in his era, “Do not hope to reestablish good taste, we are in every sense in times of the most horrible decadence.” However, in the later nineteenth century, there was a shift in expressions of political and personal infection and decay according to contemporary studies of neurasthenia. At the height of European imperialism, in 1892, Max Nordau published the best-selling Entartung, or Degeneration, on the decay and decadence of the West. Nordau’s work was among other things, a manifestation of the ongoing French-German rivalry of self-definition at the other’s expense. Nordau targeted French bourgeois culture in particular as the locus of a neurasthenia evident in his case studies of avant-garde writing. He examined its appearance across different literatures, including Barrès’ early Symbolist work. For Nordau, the medicalized symptoms of decadence manifested themselves as both effete over-civilization, and a regression to savagery. ‘The West’s’ decline was most evident in cosmopolitan centers like

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**Thermidorean classical republicanism, see Andrew Jainchill, “The Constitution of the Year III and the Persistence of Classical Republicanism,” in French Historical Studies, Vol. 26, No. 3 (summer 2003), pp. 399-435. Jainchill stresses that classical republicanism was not a uniform or static discourse, but one that was adapted to particular circumstances.**


**78 On this German-French cultural (and classicist) relationship, see Mah, Enlightenment Phantasies.**
Paris, spreading its infection across the continent, weakening the virile strength of Europe, against the oriental barbarians who would provide a nemesis, both as enemy and judge. Decadence, expressed between poles of orientalized barbarism and feminized over-refinement, is a term that concealed so much more than it revealed about social transformation in the period.⁷⁹

**Latinité**

Racial formations in the nineteenth century were much more fluid than is often supposed. Race could signify a people that were not necessarily defined by their common genetic background, but by essentialist cultural affinities. Just as one can find repeated references to a “Muslim race” in the nineteenth century, indeed colonial demography in Algeria made this more or less explicit, there were by contrast repeated references to a Latin race regenerating along the routes of French empire. In the nineteenth century, Latinité, or *l'idée latine*, came to mean more than possessing a proper classical Latin style as it had denoted in the seventeenth century; it came to signify something of a French ethnicization of classicism. In other words, the term Latinité came to take on the meaning that the Greco-Roman classical tradition was the root of French people’s constituent and

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⁷⁹ Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (London: Heinemann, 1895), The classical republican political discourse on corruption, via Aristotle, posited that every state was constituted in a finite time. A state, like a human life, would, over time, be subject to internal and external corrupting influences, and eventually, like a body, grow sick and die. This classical republican life-cycle of the state required as perfect a constitution as possible to delay inevitable necrosis. See Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*.  

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essential culture or as some had it, the very essence of their *race* as French people. This was a classical essence they shared with other Neo-Latin races, such as Catalans and Italians—at least according to French nationalists seeking allies on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War, and/or regionalist movements like the Félibrige seeking ties to other Mediterranean regionalist movements in Catalunya and later northern Italy.  

These were people who shared a Latin essence because they were descendants of barbarians who had been conquered and assimilated as Latins by imperial conquest. Scholars like geographer Onésime Reclus or the sociologist Gabriel Tarde were explicit on this matter. As Reclus noted,

> The leader who decided Gaul was Roman—Caesar—introduced our home to the blood of Italy and the Latin tongue. Their blood could not defeat indigenous blood, but that language killed the Gauls. Two or three hundred years sufficed for this work of death: what could illiterate, simple people, with only songs and some proverbs, do against the literary language spoken by the masters of the world, language of soldiers, lawyers, judges, tax collectors, merchants, language of the baths and of the circuses?

Significantly Reclus argued this barbarous origin at the heart of French civilization in a work partly on colonialism in Algeria, in which he coined the term ‘francophone’—meaning people who already were, or were in the process of becoming through conquest, French. The French colonization of Algeria, in the writings of Reclus, merely mimicked, repeated and extended the logic of Roman linguistic imperialism, a logic that was France’s particular genius because it had

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been already conquered and through the logic of classical imitation, assimilated
the civilization it had lost to as its own, extending its traditions beyond the end of
the Roman Empire’s existence. This latter point was explicit in Gabriel Tarde’s
own theorization of French imperialism, which he argued in the neo-
traditionalist journal *La Renaissance Latine*.

One of the most important rallying cries for French identity during the
classical renaissance was that of Latinité, a movement with which Bertrand was
closely associated as a leading theorist. France’s classical heritage was its
constituent and essential culture. France’s supposed Latin identity—one that was
exclusionary of German or ‘Oriental’ barbarism, but also importantly of northern
French regionalist movements—had been a rallying cry before the neo-
traditionalist revival of the 1890s. The call to defend the “Latin races” against the
barbarians had been iterated on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War and even
earlier. Indeed it could be traced back to the cultural binaries reinforced by Anne
Louise Germaine de Staël in her *De l’Allemagne*, influential on both sides of the
Rhine. The avant-garde fabricated aesthetic-political programs specific to their
period and interests, but drew upon a set of ‘authentic’ French cultural signifiers
like Latin identity that had already been at least to some degree mapped out in
the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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82 Tarde, “L’Impérialisme.”
Latinité was an idea important to neo-traditionalists, but like ‘classicism’ it was a term whose meaning was contextual, and had changed over the course of the nineteenth century. The idea of the neo-latin races of Iberia, Italy and France coming together had its first appearance in an Orientalist reverie by Claude-François Lallemand in his 1843 book *Le Hachych*. This was according to Alphonse Roche the first expression of *l'idée latine*, written as if under visions brought on by the hashish introduced to him by Abyssinians, but “instead of the ‘visions érotiques’ or ‘fureurs guérrrières’ of the Abyssinians who had taught him the use of hashish, Lallemand’s ‘spokesman’ experienced ‘des extases politiques’.”

Le *Hachych* was a drug-induced science-fiction prophecy of the year 1943. These ecstatic political visions included the non-compulsory union of Spanish, Italian and French nations. These Latin peoples would ally under a rainbow, “where all the shades of the fundamental colors mix without merging or losing entirely their primitive character” with France as its geographic and spiritual center.

The period in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, a period of increasing mobility for the middle class, of institutional centralization in France, and of literary crises— with each phenomenon reinforcing panics about foreign influence and contagion— saw an increasing focus on Latin identity and the classical roots of French identity. The year following the war, Romance language studies were founded in France. Literary scholar Gaston Paris, trained in

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83 Roche, *Provençal Regionalism*, p. 78.
84 As quoted in Roche, *Provençal Regionalism*, p. 79.
philology in Germany, founded its flagship journal, *Romania*. Romance studies
gazed back to an era when the influence of an expansive Latin civilization
remained firmly established from England to the Middle East to North Africa.
Gaston Paris was also a great support to, and publicist of, the Provençal
regionalist movement of the Félibrige that had been an important influence on
Maurras’s own focus on Latinité. Regionalist movements critical of the
centralizing, Jacobin republic also paradoxically profited from the expansion of
schooling and universities even as these normalized national education: the
Félibre Latin benefited from the resources of the university at Montpellier even as
it sought to defend Provençal culture from an ever-encroaching state. Onésime
Reclus argued they were as guilty of homogenizing local cultures within a
regional rubric as the Jacobin state was of homogenizing regional cultures within
a national one. Provincials who had come to Paris and returned to the provinces
returned with more than just disdain for the dreaded cosmopolis; they
maintained and extended contacts with their fellow avant-garde intellectuals
among regionalist aesthetic movements, and at the end of the nineteenth century,
in colonial Algeria as well. Founded earlier in 1854, by the late nineteenth century
the Félibrige was not just an attempt to maintain or combine waning Provençal

86 See for example Charles-Brun’s discussion of the Félibrige Latin centered around Université Montpellier, “Le Félibrige latin,” in *La Plume*, 1er janvier, 1898, p. 27. It is also worth noting the divisions evident here not only between particular Félibre-inspired movements, but also within them.
87 Onésime Reclus, *France, Algérie et colonies* (Hachette, 1886) pp. 434-440
customs and languages into a more unitary and elitist regional movement, it was also a key cultural meeting point for French intellectuals in the Pays d’Oc. In fact it was due to the Félibrige that a young instructor Louis Bertrand, invited to one of the regular *randonées* of the Félibres by his lycée student and prodigy Joachim Gasquet, was first introduced to another Provençal writer, future founder of the Action Française Charles Maurras. In the middle of August, 1891, the same year Bertrand left Provence to teach in Algeria, Gasquet brought him to a cultural *randonnée* of the Félibrige, at the Cap d’Antibes on the Côte d’Azur, attended by Paul Mariéton, Gasquet, and Maurras.\(^8\) Maurras was only twenty-three; Bertrand a few years older. Soon into the evening Bertrand found himself in the midst of one of Maurras’ habitual violent controversies: Maurras had slapped Mariéton and challenged him to a duel for having insulted Jean Moréas, at least in the eyes of Maurras. Maurras asked Bertrand to be his second—a fitting introduction for their on again, off again association. Maurras would be ruthless in his reviews of Bertrand’s early work. He was dismissive of *Le Fin du classicisme* in that it challenged Maurras’ own classicism.\(^9\) As in the salons, cafes, and publishing houses of Paris, so too did the avant-garde gather together in the provinces. The most venerated Félibre poet Frédéric Mistral, like Gaston Paris,

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\(^8\) See “La Rivera que j’ai connu, I,” in *La Revue Universelle* (1 March, 1931) pp. 11-50; and Centre des archives d’outre mer (CAOM) 75 APOM 45, Fonds Randau-Arnaud, Ricord manuscript, p. 111.

privileged the idea of France as a crucible of the “Latin race”, an identity that was however not restricted to French national borders. To give a famous example of Latinité from the Félibrige, Mistral’s poem “À la race latine,” delivered in 1878 during a regionalist festival in Montpellier, sought to awaken a solidarity among (exclusively Catholic and European) Mediterranean peoples along traditionalist lines:

[…Latin Race, in memory
Of your always brilliant past,
Lift yourself towards hope
And fraternize beneath the Cross!...]

For Mistral, the Mediterranean landscape, sun, its (Catholic) traditions, and (Latin-based) languages all had a hand in shaping and rooting a Latin people. Latinité would be imported by Bertrand, Reclus and others as a key marker of colonial identity condensed upon the various settler communities in Algeria, but it was already earlier a French nationalist identity, and it was also infra-national, that is, of a particular region of France. Finally, it was even a trans-national identity, in that it was an identity in fellowship with neo-Latin regionalist movements that were nascent in Catalunya and Italy as well. Latinité came to be conflated with French, Provençal and settler Algerian identities, mapping over these components of greater France through a neo-traditionalist world-view. As with classicism, it was a slippery marker of identity, and thus amenable to being a site of debate about French authenticity in this period. The image of the Latin

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90 As quoted in Izzo and Fabre, *La Méditerranée française*, p. 70.
Mediterranean race, regenerating regional traditions lost amid the dislocation of modernity, would translate easily enough across the Mediterranean with Bertrand as its most vocal spokesperson. Latinité was an important component in the fashioning of authentic Algerian settlers, dubbed néo-latins who promised to re-energize the dormant vitalism of the Latin races by their example. The Neo-Latins were races conquered and civilized by the Romans; onetime barbarians who had become inheritors of Greco-Roman civilization (thus for its advocates civilization in toto), parvenus now spreading this originary genius across the Mediterranean in the face of German/Jewish/Arab barbarism. Gabriel Tarde’s contemporary notions of imitation and imperialism presupposed that France was only aping a civilization whose people were dead, but a civilization that lived on in the imitative imperialism of Greater France.91 Herein was one of the paradoxes of Latinité: it posited that France possessed the genius of civilization and conquest, by virtue of having been conquered and assimilated by the civilization they now slavishly imitated as classicism. And it was this question of classical imitation, and cultural regeneration, that were central themes among the neo-traditionalists of the 1890s.

Avant-Garde Neo-Traditionalism: Symbolists, Romanes, and Naturistes

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91 See Tarde, “L’Impérialisme.”
Many (if not all) earlier French canonical writers were by definition *classiques*, including decadents like Baudelaire, as *classique* implies among other things canonicity—that which is taught in the schools. In the neo-traditionalist revival of the 1890s, the École Romane and the Naturistes positioned themselves against enemies of French culture from without, such as literary importations of German, Slavic or Oriental contagion to French culture, or enemies within, such as avant-garde Symbolists. In their works, we see the inter-related problematic of reaction, colonialism and modernism coalesce as a neo-traditionalist framework by which to understand the crises they imagined France and Western Civilization faced, at least from their shared perspectives.

Most members of avant-garde movements were in some way or other classicists. The fact that they are often lumped under the term Romantic confuses the tentative reality of people attempting, aborting, negotiating, and losing interest in different styles that drew in various ways upon precedents.

Parnassians were classicists, as is evident from any superficial examination of the works of Parnassian poet Leconte de Lisle. Although hated by Action Française classicist Pierre Lasserre, Leconte de Lisle would remain a far-right icon even as his Parnassian contemporaries like Théophile Gautier were repudiated. Leconte de Lisle’s most famous works were titled, appropriately, *Poèmes antiques* and *Poèmes barbares*.92

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Likewise, Symbolists, who reacted against Parnassian preciousness and Naturalist and Impressionist pseudo-documentary aesthetic strategies, were avid classicists, as can be clearly seen by some of their most famous manifestos: Jean Moréas’ texts, Maurice Barrès’ early novels, or André Gide’s Symbolist manifesto *Le Traité de Narcisse* are clearly as much revisions of French classicism as they are idealist and early modernist works. The question is not whether the Symbolists or members of another movement were classicists, but rather what kind of classicists they were. So after having examined the social, political and economic context which helped shape a neo-traditionalist world-view, and shared ideas on classicism, Latinité, decadence and regeneration, we shall turn to a closer examination of how different aesthetic movements helped fashion neo-traditionalism as a set of ideas, with particular emphasis on the writings of two of its chief proponents, Barrès and Maurras.

Symbolists were diverse in temperament, style, and interest, not unlike the quality of their works. But as members of this avant-garde movement, they tended to share a belief that the confusion of the era—this era of a “dream world of mass consumption”93—could be made comprehensible by revealing the overlying ideas that constituted it. Many Symbolists, like Gide, were drawn to Neo-Platonic thought. Most everyone of this movement was some sort of idealist. Many cited Schopenhauer and other German nineteenth-century figures as

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93 Williams, *Dreamworlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France*. 112
important influences, or other supposedly foreign figures and texts like those of Spinoza, Dostoevsky, and *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and *Les Milles et Une Nuits*.94 But the Symbolists of the 1880s were not the same as those of the 1890s. Many Symbolists, Camille Mauclair, Maurice Barrès, Paul Adam and others, would go on to be leading figures in the neo-traditionalist revival of the 1890s, even as many members of this revival distanced themselves from this intellectual and aesthetic precedent. The *École Romane* is itself better seen as a classicist and ultranationalist revision within Symbolism, among many neo-traditionalist revisions of the 1890s, rather than as the opposite movement they pretended to be; the founding manifestos of each movement were written by the same man, Jean Moréas.95 The most famous writer associated with Naturisme, another neo-classicist anti-Symbolist movement, was André Gide who had himself earlier been a key Symbolist intellectual. As Camille Mauclaire looking back upon this period explained, the 1870 generation intuited the need for “an inquiry into foreign thought, of free exchange opposed to the narrow protectionism of what we could call chauvinistic literature.” This led the Symbolists to “Russian novels, Wagnerism, Ibsenism and Nietzscheanism.” However, this literary promiscuity

94 Pierrot, *The Decadent Imagination*, passim.
95 Richard Shryock, “Reaction within Symbolism : The École Romane,” in *The French Review*, vol. 71, 1998. Poggioli notes, “Certainly it was symbolism which carried one of the external signs most characteristically avant-garde to the highest degree of development: periodicals of the group or movement; all of them were organs for a specific creative current and, especially, for a particular tendency of taste.” Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 21. In this sense, looking too closely at individual journals and movements, and not seeing the fluid movements of intellectuals, and their common frames of reference (particularly the neo-classicist reaction common among many in the 1890s), is one of the possible explanations of why neo-traditionalism or the ‘renaissance classique’ has not been treated more systematically.
resulted in a cost: a realization of national impotency and cultural
disintegration. Mauclaire like other modernists explained these shifts in avant-
garde concerns in a language that drew on and collapsed contemporary debates
and anxieties about economic trade in the midst of the Long Depression, political
ties in an era of increasing imperial competition, and fears about French
masculinity. Symbolism came to be associated with national degeneration,
effeminacy and decadence, even if so many of these critics had been Symbolists
themselves.

A milestone in this evolution of Symbolism and neo-traditionalism was
Barrès’s trilogy Le Culte du moi, which over the period of its publication between
1888 to 1891, mirrored his own evolution as a Symbolist: from individualist
bohemian aesthete to ultranationalist Boulangist deputy. Unlike Maurras, whose
aesthetic and political positions were relatively set and static by the mid-1890s,
Barrès’s life and work constantly shifted in emphases and political parti pris, as he
sought ever new experiences and literary experiments that would influence
generations of French intellectuals—from decadent Parisian aesthete of the mid-
1880s, to ultra-nationalist and provincial regionalist through much of the 1890s,
to exoticizing Orientalist, colonialist and Catholic mystic of the 1900s until his
death—although one can find traces and echoes of the concerns from each of
these periods in the others. Le Culte du moi was a quest for ever-increasing

December, 1903, pp. 600.
sensation, good or ill, that would, over the course of the trilogy of volumes, eventually lead the figure of the itinerant individualist and decadent aesthete — the Symbolist author as focus of the Symbolist novel — to his own reconstitution within a nationalist framework that mirrored his own political evolution.

Classicism and Romanticism were all part of France’s intellectual tradition according to Barrès. Whatever excited one’s development was to be incorporated within oneself and one’s sense of patrimony. In Robert Soucy’s discussion of Barrès’ *Le Culte du Moi*, he perspicaciously observes the key to the books is the dialectical transformation of the artist and society.\(^97\) The artist proceeds from his modernist experience of uprooted destitution to his re-immersion in a national collectivity, a collectivity which he then reshapess in his own image. Finding himself rooted again, but by choice, he will, in a reinvention of national tradition eradicated by modernity, create for his people a new rootedness based on his own individuality. “He will recall Lorraine to her true self; she will recall him to his true self. Together, they will regenerate each other.”\(^98\) For Barrès, by embodying the spirit of his native Lorranois, he finds the necessary force to regenerate that spirit for his people, who have lost their traditions and collective sense of self. Lorraine, invaded so often by foreigners ‘she’ risked losing ‘her’

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\(^97\) This opinion is corroborated by George Putnam: “The glorification of the nation and the belief in dialectical process, the conviction that all is ‘becoming’ and hence relative, are notions which Hegelians never relinquish. These two ideas, along with the particular notion of the nature of freedom [...] are the Hegelian concepts employed most often and most thoroughly by Barrès.”


\(^98\) Soucy, *Fascism in France: The Case of Maurice Barrès*, p. 72.
identity, is found again through the artist: “he will give that patrimony his own personal expression. His articulation of the collective unconscious will bear his own individual stamp.” 99 And his regionalist regeneration will be in turn the model for a national one—national energy will be recuperated by reinventing the traditions lost of the petite patrie. The trilogy stands as Barrès’s attempt to not only describe his own political evolution, but prescribe the modernist narrative as the model by which individual and national regeneration will be followed by other intellectuals and his readership. His was a modernist vision of regenerating France. He engineered a series of psychological novels that would follow him and his protagonists to the edge of French identity and then reroot them, as well the individual reader, in a fantasy of recuperated tradition and nationalism, mediated through his experimental novels. As Datta points out, he critiqued Dreyfusards for only following this Hegelian journey of “national egoism” part-way:

“Here is the incomplete reasoning of those who are called ‘Intellectuals.’ These people are capable of attaining the first level of culture: they know that an individual should first know himself and should take possession, in order to make use of it, of his Self, But they do not go far enough, in order to determine how the self,… destroys itself to leave behind it the collectivity that produced it.” 100

Regeneration of the individual and nation were mutually dependent. As even provincial life had lost its traditions, the intellectual had to augment them or create them anew for the French people. Le Culte du moi was perhaps the most

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99 As quoted in Soucy, Fascism in France: The Case of Maurice Barrès, p. 72.
100 Barrès as quoted in Datta, Birth of a National Icon, p. 199.
influential series of works of the period until his later trilogy *Les Déracinés*. The people were rooted by common experience to their land, which Barrès opposed to the foreigner: “in the same way the Greeks saw only barbarians outside of the Greek fatherland.” For Barrès, it was through an opposition to foreign barbarians by which a people were defined. Novelist and critic Paul Bourget was one of Barrès’s earliest admirers, and followed his career until Barrès’s death. He argued that

The “culte du moi”, as Barrès defines it in his ideological novels, is foremost a defense against the ‘Barbarians’. One should understand this word as the Greeks had expressed it. The barbarian is the foreigner, ‘the adversary’, as he says in *Le Jardin de Bérénice*, he whose sensibility is in its essence the antagonist of ours. Here we have the classic formulation of the I that is expressed in opposition. This affirmation of its tastes, desires, and singular élans leads a Barrès to better understand himself. He himself called this his period of enrichment. Enrichment was achieved foremost by travels. Thus were written the works *Du Sang, de la Volupté et de la Mort, Amori et Dolori Sacrum, Greco ou le Secret de Tolède*.101

In his last years, Barrès turned to travel outside his nation again in order to better understand it, in an elaboration of the theory of Latinité. He thought that the liminal bastions between a Catholic and Latin France and the barbarian enemy were the privileged spaces of French regeneration, whether in Alsace and Lorraine, or through the example of French Catholic missions in the Middle East. France was the inheritor of a Mediterranean Greco-Latin civilization, synonymous with Western Civilization, and thus had to renew its energies not

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only in the face of (for Barrès) France’s most intimate enemy Germany, but along this interior sea’s shores where it met the Orient and Africa. Barrès’ orientalism is well-known. He even figures in Said’s *Orientalism*. David Carroll and Ida-Marie Frandon have each contributed to better understanding the importance of images of Africa, the Middle East, or more vaguely ‘The Orient’ in his works, and how it signified in complex ways throughout his early writings, most famously embodied in the fictional figure of Astiné Aravian in *Les Déracinés*, whose oriental (and feminine) seductiveness have as perverting and degenerating an influence on French masculine attempts at individual and national becoming as Bouteiller the neo-Kantian university instructor does—however in her case, her corruption is halted by her brutal murder. In his essay “La Séduction de l’Islam,” on the genius of Isabelle Eberhardt, Barrès engaged in a description of her motivations that sounded little like her and instead remarkably autobiographical (and for Barrès, unsurprisingly solipsistic):

> There are spirits for whom primitive civilization exerts an all-powerful attraction. These are most often highly refined spirits for whom civilization no longer offers new emotions, and who find when in contact with beings less complicated than we a rejuvenation of their sensibility.

For Barrès, Islam and the Orient are important only inasmuch as they are a source of primitive energies that when in proximity, will rejuvenate and

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103 Carroll’s discussion of the significance of Astiné Aravian is in *French Literary Fascism*, pp. 32-39. For more on Barrès’s particular orientalism, see Ida-Marie Frandon’s *L’Orient de Maurice Barrès: étude de genèse* (1952).
regenerate the always precarious French ego through greater sensation and
experience. Barrès would become increasingly preoccupied with the Middle East
in his later years, composing his Oriental reverie *Un Jardin sur l’Oronte* and
publishing his reflections of his journey to Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey *Une
Enquête aux pays du Levant*. In the latter he examined the Middle East in its
connections to both contemporary French imperialism and classical Greco-Latin
culture, and saw it as the site of a forward-looking regenerated France.

According to Bourget, Barrès’s *Une Enquête aux pays du Levant*, “certainly showed
us the Barrès of moving lyricism, the poet of a magical and so trembling style, but
also the *servant*—I will come back to this term, for me it is the most beautiful—
who wants to reattach, I cite him again, ‘to a more powerful collectivity.’ It is for
France that he searched in the Orient.”\(^{105}\) Thus France’s continued presence—
read colonial conquest and occupation—would revivify the nation between the
poles of decadent cultural promiscuity, and static cultural isolation. But these
later works actually follow Bertrand’s previous itineraries to North Africa and
the Middle East which we examine in Chapter Four. In fact, Barrès had asked
Bertrand for advice on his own journey. But of course, these were tours already

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\(^{105}\) Bourget, *Quelques témoignages*, pp. 183-4. Arch-xenophobe Barrès had written, “I have always
desired that Asian land with a fiery folly. I turned myself towards her in all my hours of
drought.” As quoted in “Actualités littéraires: Maurice Barrès,” in *Chronique des lettres françaises*,
no. 7, January-February 1924, p. 43; In *Enquête aux pays du Levant*, he wrote that “It is up to each of
us that he finds in himself the hidden source of enthusiasm. It is up to each of us to become
oneself most forcefully. More than anyone, the Orientals have known and deployed this motive
force that the individual keeps at the bottom of his being.” *Ibid.* On a sustained examination of
the importance of the idea of the Orient in Barrès’s aesthetic and political writings, see Ida-Marie
Frandon, *L’Orient de Maurice Barrès*, passim.
well traveled, and over-written, by French classicists and Romantics. But they took on a particular importance in elaborating French identity within the specific modernist/reactionary regenerative programs of the neo-traditionalists—this journey was a source for arriving at a regenerated source of French vitalism and energy which would revivify and transform the metropole. Even with the most xenophobic of French cultural and political figures, Charles Maurras, colonial fantasies would help him order the ways in which he wed political and aesthetic nationalist models in a classical framework.

Barrès’s influence upon other neo-traditionalists was broadly acknowledged, but he also served as a titular representative of broader cultural trends in a collective elaboration of a neo-traditionalist world-view that depended as much on the conceit of the individual artist as Promethean shaper of polities through an aesthetic vision as much as the fantasy of a collectivity that would in turn be transformed. Patricia Lorcin observes that Bertrand’s writing was infused with Barrèsian themes that he simultaneously sought to distance himself from: “Bertrand was not only aware of Barrès but saw in him a rival whom he was never able to eclipse and from whom he consciously delineated himself intellectually.” 106 Bertrand did however acknowledge these influences, if only to Barrès. Shortly after his first novel came out, he wrote to Barrès that it was in fact in Les Déracinés that for the first time was explored the question of

106 Lorcin, Imperial Identities, p. 199.
Latin regeneration that Bertrand sought in this “ever-so-vibrant Algeria, so full of promise and so calumnied.” Flattered that Barrès had expressed interest in *Le sang des races*, Bertrand wrote to him in an letter in 1899, that “it is the first time, I believe, that one tries to tell the story of this conquest of African soil by the Latin race of the Mediterranean basin.”

Barrès’s influence was not restricted to France but also extended to the borderlands of the nation and empire. Gide later condemned him because he feared that Barrès would be a teacher to France’s enemies as well. He was deeply admired by German ultra-nationalists like Ernst Jünger. His colonial legacy was also important. He was a key influence on the Lebanese proponents of Phoenicianism, or the classical origins of the country’s Christians quarantined from Arab history and culture—a Mediterranean narrative that had many parallels to that of Latinité. Latinité, as a model of an immortal classical empire living on in the imitative expressions of the descendants of the barbarians it had conquered, has striking similarities to Charles Corm’s Barrésian-inspired model of a Phoenician identity for Maronite Christians, and Barrès was a key influence on Corm, Michel Chiha, and Hector Klat. As we see in Chapter Seven, Barrès’s

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107 Fonds Barrès, 18 lettres de Louis Bertrand à Maurice Barrès, BNF manuscrit.
109 “Both Michel Chiha and Hector Klat would later describe the extent to which Barrès influenced them. Klat very enthusiastically wrote about his meeting with Barrès on the latter’s journey in the East, which Barrès later portrayed in a book entitled *Une Enquête aux Pays du Levant*. Twenty years after Barrès’ visit to Lebanon, Charles Corm, the living and financial spirit behind the intellectual activity of the Phoenicians during the Mandate, wrote in the introduction to his book, *La Montagne Inspirée*, for many years the Phoenician manifesto, that he dedicated his book to Barrès ‘qui a sû nous comprendre parce qu’il nous a aimés’ and to Victor Bérard ‘qui nous restitua une
(and Maurras’s and Bertrand’s) influences were felt among intellectuals in Algeria as well. A unitary settler identity was in many ways a neo-traditionalist fantasy; and perhaps no settler intellectual was more influenced by Barrès than anti-fascist colonist Albert Camus. However, Barrès’s important place in a neo-traditionalist canon does not mean that he invented or originated these ideas—they were a set of concerns and strategies evident in a number of contemporaries’ works. Neo-traditionalist ideas, like those of the avant-garde generally, depended on positioning oneself against earlier texts. Barrès’ texts, like those of Maurras, fit the bill better than most.

If Barrès was an important contributor to French neo-traditionalism, Charles Maurras’s particular configuration of aesthetics and politics was the most influential in determining an exclusive, xenophobic French ‘authenticity’ for the twentieth century. Like most modernists, Maurras was both inside and outside the avant-garde: publishing in their journals, but also one of the key leaders and intellectuals of the federalist movement of regionalists in the fin-de-siècle and famously along with Barrès a leading anti-Dreyfusard. Wellek argues that the term ‘classicism’ was popularized in the 1890s especially by Maurras, who reacted against the earlier and peculiar classicism of the Parnassians by

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On Maurras as avant-garde, see Datta, Birth of a National Icon, p. 68.
championing Jean Moréas’ aesthetic classicist movement of the École Romane. The École Romane was a purgation of foreign experimentation and northern European and Germanic influence. These anathema were isolated onto Symbolism as Symbolism was accused of importing foreign contagion into its decadent literature. The Romanes called for adapting classical formalism to modern poetry and assumed an attendant traditionalist and reactionary politics. In terms of chef d’œuvres, the output was more meager than Symbolism, perhaps unsurprising given its self-imposed formal restrictions. However, as a doubled aesthetic-political framework for literary criticism, the École Romane was incredibly successful. And this was aided by Maurras’s tactical genius for drawing some movements into his orbit while isolating others. The Romane framework provided Maurras with much of the reactionary and aesthetic and

\[111\] The most thorough and illuminating work on Maurras’ early years, leading up to the formation of the Action Française, is Victor Nguyen’s sympathetic study, Aux origines de l’Action française. Intelligence et politique autour des années 1900 (Fayard, 1991). Other important works on Maurras include Gaetano Deleonibus, Charles Maurras’s Classicising Aesthetics: An Aestheticization of Politics, Currents in Comparative Romance Languages and Literatures (2000); Michael Curtis, Against the Third Republic: Sorel, Barrès and Maurras; Eugen Weber, Action Francaise: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France (Stanford University Press, 1962); David Carroll, French Literary Fascism; Zeev Sternhell, La Droite révolutionnaire, 1885-1914. Sternhell, Les origines françaises du fascisme, revised edition (Gallimard, 1997); Robert Soucy, French Fascism, The First Wave, 1924-1933. Like Taine and Zola, Maurras’ central analogy for the role of the artist was that of ‘physician’, who dissects in an empirical manner, or through an ‘empiricisme organisateur’ which was for Maurras “to cure the disease of un-Frenchness’ infecting French letters under the guise of German erudition... [and it] would also serve as a remedy for, or rather a revenge against, the ‘maladie de l’intelligence’ caused by (German) Romanticism in the world of letters and by agents of foreign powers in the world of politics.” DeLeonibus, pp 74-5. “While the [Action Française] attracted literary critics and novelists, and even those who practised the non-literary arts, most of the intellectuals were in some way historians.” Wilson quotes Jean Longnon as explanation: “a disciple of Barrès and of Maurras places a strong emphasis on the capital importance of history: the doctrine of the Land and the Dead, like those of Empiricisme organisateur [motto of Maurras’ political ideology], find in it their foundation, they claim to enrich the present with the entire past...” Stephen Wilson, “The ‘Action Francaise’ in French Intellectual Life,” in The Historical Journal, 12 (1969), pp. 332-3.
political structure he would import to the Action Française. For Maurras, literary criticism meant evaluating works according to the true record of French historical tradition, in order to understand the underlying order of French society as a source and blueprint for the reformation of France’s future—this central idea in his essays he dubbed with the Comtian term ‘l’empirisme organisateur’. Even given their position for protecting French tradition, which was in fact a very specific rereading of French history, a rereading which excised and quarantined what was deemed ‘foreign’, there was considerable innovation in Maurras’s and other Romanes’ theories of aesthetics and mass politics.112

If there was an attempt to purify French letters and politics from the barbarism of the Revolution and Romanticism, it meant working backwards and finding the ‘correct’ narrative of French classicism—whom to include and whom to exclude. Of the latter, Rousseau the foreigner—or ‘métèque’, the term Maurras borrowed from classical Greek to signify the figure of foreign contagion in France113—was singled out as something of a one-man catastrophe for French civilization, with Martin Luther a close second in his embodiment of Old Testament Jewish and German barbarism. If neo-traditionalists often condensed

112 Maurras was constantly adapting modernist philosophy to his aims of recreating a literary and political renaissance. For instance, Maurras understood heredity according to Tarde’s sociological models: “Nature most commonly proceeds by imitation and repetition: but it also has its innovations, its caprices, its initiatives. In this case it acts with an extreme vigor.”Charles Maurras, “l’Hérédité,” Mes idées politiques (Fayard, 1937), p. 63.
113 Maurras was selective in his application of this racist term, acting as the police of other’s authenticity: Zola the Dreyfusard who had Italian ancestry was a métèque; Barrès the anti-Dreyfusard with Spanish ancestry was not; Rousseau who was Swiss Romantic was a métèque; Moréas who was Greek neo-classicist was not.
onto Barrès’ name a host of aesthetic and political phenomena — dandyism, psychologism, regionalism, ultra-nationalism, regeneration, and so on — that were in fact shared by other intellectuals among the neo-traditionalist avant-garde, Rousseau shouldered much of the blame for the various diseases of French civilization: revolution, innovation, Romanticism.

It was one of the more remarkable things about this generation that saw the birth of the term ‘intellectual’. Literary figures in the 1890s were adapting their aesthetic programs developed in the context of debates among the avant-garde as political platforms to regenerate the country as a whole. Their literary experiments were designed in view of transforming the putative cul-de-sac of French political modernity. Barrès’ and Maurras’ trajectories are two particularly influential examples of this phenomenon. The most influential classicists of the 1890s were leading anti-Dreyfusards: whether Ferdinand Brunetière, Bertrand’s professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure; or Félibre and royalist Maurras. In no small part due to Maurras’s prodigious output, particularly as a leading critic of avant-garde aesthetics, literary classicism was intimately tied to political reaction by the end of the nineteenth century in France.\footnote{Michael Curtis, \textit{Three Against the Republic: Sorel, Barrès, and Maurras}, (Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 124-5. See also David Carroll, \textit{French Literary Fascism}.} For Maurras and the Romanes, a ‘true’ classicism involved the imitation of a Greco-Latin order and reason that was the national patrimony of France, opposed to the foreign-inspired irrational and Romantic innovations of the Symbolists and the entirety of the anarchic
nineteenth century. For Maurras, all French history since the French Revolution had been a journey away from French virtue and strength. As René Wellek puts it, “what at first was only the polemical gimmick of a small coterie became in the hands of Maurras a powerful ideological weapon in a movement which extended far beyond poetry and even literature.”115 As with Barrès, the self-development of the individual was realized by their total immersion into the nation. Malraux, who admired Maurras, wrote in the preface to the latter’s Mademoiselle Monk: “To go from intellectual anarchy to the ‘Action Française’ is not to contradict, but to construct. If he loved living in Greece, it is because their philosophers were accustomed to put into harmony their lives and their philosophies... He loved

115 René Wellek, “French ‘Classical’ Criticism in the Twentieth Century,” Yale French Studies, no. 38, The Classical Line: Essays in Honor of Henri Peyre. (1967), p. 48. See also Wellek, “The Term and Concept of ‘Classicism’ in Literary History,” in Aspects of the Eighteenth Century, Earl R. Wasserman ed. (Baltimore, 1965), pp. 105-28. René Wellek surmises that Maurras, champion of Moréas’ École Romane, was a key figure in politicizing classicisme and classique, sometime in the period of 1894-1900. It is perhaps unsurprising given this troubling genealogy intertwined with integral nationalism that more recent classicists are loathe to pinpoint its precise location in 1890s French letters. But Maurras’ paternity risks exaggerating his own importance in what were debates among many avant-garde writers about the recuperation of French tradition in this period. Paul Verlaine, decadent and symbolist, was also using the term classicisme in 1894 in his study of intellectual battles between classicism and romanticism since 1830 — revaluing these terms with an eye to the École Romane and Symbolist debates of his time. Classicism and Romanticism were established as competing or inter-related strains of French tradition. But by the early twentieth century, classicism was firmly established as the domain of the Action Française. The program of the Nouvelle Revue Française, along with the positions of many of its neo-classicists including Julien Benda and André Gide, was an explicit attempt to resignify classicism in a more inclusive (as Gide put it, classicism as “broken-in Romanticism” Gide, Billets à Angèle (1921)) yet nationalist sense both prior to World War I, and in the inter-war period. The NRF could be seen as a revaluing of classicism, as they claimed, without political positions — which in itself was a repudiation of Maurras’ Action Française. But the expulsion of classicist and traditionalist Eugène Montfort as editor, suggests otherwise. It was Montfort who had actually suggested the title, Nouvelle Revue Française. Maaike Neeltj Koffereman-Bijman, Entre Classicisme et Modernité: La Nouvelle Revue Française dans le champ littéraire de la Belle Époque (2003), p. 37.
passionately, in Greece and Italy, that which would determine the mode of French genius.”

By the mid-1890s Maurras, after meeting Maurice Barrès, had become a central theorist of the classical renaissance. Even Maurras, this neo-traditionalist initially most hostile to a political program of imperial expansion, could not help himself but be drawn to fantasizing about the Orient in his search for France’s Greco-Latin cultural roots. As Carroll notes, Maurras defined barbarism as “Jewish, Protestant, and German—in short, ‘Oriental’; in its essence, everything that was opposed to and destructive of ‘Western civilization,’ that is, the classical world and its only legitimate modern heir: Catholic, royalist France.” Maurras and the Algiers deputy Édouard Drumont emphasized the ‘oriental’ or Arab characteristics of Jews, as Maurras would and again emphasize the ‘oriental’ essence of Germany. Michael Curtis sums up the opposition well: “To the Oriental German-Judaic dream, individual, liberal and mystical, [Maurras said] ‘we oppose Western thought, traditional, classic, scientific, and social thought […] Hellenic-Latin civilization, French order.’” According to Gaetano DeLeonibus, it was a “classicising aesthetics and not one of the biologist theories at his time [which] drove the racism of Maurras’ nationalism.” Yet as much a xenophobe as Maurras was, he had earlier argued in his École Romane manifesto:

117 Caroll, French Literary Fascism, p. 75.
118 Curtis, Three Against the Republic, p. 123.
119 DeLeonibus, Charles Maurras’s Classicising Aeshtetics, p. 7.
“Certainly, the Barbarian is useful. He has strong feelings, sometimes violent enough to inspire disgust...”\textsuperscript{120} or in Maurras’ case, spur in reaction a classical revival.\textsuperscript{121}

In 1896, during his crucial pilgrimage/tour of Greece during the first modern Olympic Games, he came to reflect on Mediterranean classical civilization as he stood upon a mountain on the outskirts of Athens, and based on his musings, wrote in 1901 “Le Mirage d’Orient” which in his reflections at the heart of Greek civilization, begins with the sentence: “I too, have seen the Orient.” In this essay we find many of Maurras’s assumptions about the regenerative effects of classical civilization, and its opposition to foreign barbarism, break down even as he attempts to clearly delineate these differences. It is an interesting text not only as a marker in Maurras’s development as a neo-classicist, but as with Barrès, it is a neo-classicism preoccupied with the seductive and disorienting features of Orientalist exoticism. This pairing of classicism and orientalism is a key feature of neo-traditionalism. The aesthetic and political implications of neo-traditionalism’s pairing of classicism and colonialism would be continually explored by neo-traditionalists in the twentieth century. A ‘clear’ representation of reality, realized by neo-classicist aesthetics, offered the means

\textsuperscript{120} Maurras, “Barbares et Romans.”

for understanding the colonial Mediterranean in opposition to the disorienting romanticism of an Orientalist exotic. Here foreign barbarism and modernist experimentation were conflated and refused. This is a problematic by which Bertrand’s work can be defined, but this was not a feature peculiar to him. Bertrand’s work is better understood not as an innovation, but as part of a neo-traditionalist worldview. Their attempts to regenerate classical aesthetics within a modernist framework, and thus regenerate a decadent French society resulted in certain paradoxes at the heart of this neo-traditionalist construction of French authenticity. Within the limits of this Mediterranean-based neo-classicism was an Oriental shadow that would continue to fascinate these reactionaries putatively opposed to its corrupting influences.

In “Le Mirage d’Orient,” Maurras journeys alone into the Attic landscape, reflecting upon the flora of the “basin of helleno-latin seas.” For Maurras, Attica offers him the pure vision of the pastoral idyll, and inspires in him a spontaneous recitation of Virgil and Cervantes. Attica, like Provence, possessed a lyrical quality in its very landscape. It had a humanizing influence on the gazer, according to classicist theories of the gaze and construction of subjectivity. These Mediterranean pastoral landscapes were important in particular as Greco-Latin people were often defined by theories of geographic determinism by neo-traditionalists. The Mediterranean basin was a source in renewing the Latin

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122 Mah, Enlightenment Phantasies, particularly pp. 71-115.
race’s innate appreciation of classical aesthetics, and thus the roots of their own latent vitalism. This is a recurring trope in French neo-traditionalist writings, although one can also find it in German writings as well including Nietzsche and Mann. This conceit was in agreement with tourist representations of the Mediterranean as a therapeutic curative basin. It is a theme Bertrand would explore in detail in his works on Algeria (or Roman Africa), and had some influence on another lycée instructor in Algeria, Fernand Braudel, who would contribute to Algérianiste publications while there. For a Latin to be immersed in a Mediterranean pastoral landscape was to place them before the source of neo-classical art with its own transformative effects. We will come back to this in a moment in our discussion of Naturisme as an avant-garde neo-traditionalist movement.

If Attica offers Maurras a pastoral landscape upon which to reflect, his gaze onto the organizing feature of this classical geography, the Mediterranean itself, offers him a more disorienting, seductive, and transformative experience. In this work he firmly distinguishes that “Attica is not the Orient. It is precisely the opposite of all that our imagination attaches to the term oriental. It is the land of nuance and smiles, of gracefulness shorn of all softness, of vigorous pleasures well tempered by virtue.” In short, a landscape that orders the mind as classical art does. Yet it is in Attica, gazing on Greek islands and the sea, that he

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cannot help but imagine himself drawn in by an illusory Asia—reaching out to him as a mysterious totality. In fact, as his description makes clear, he was just outside Athens on Mount Hymettus, from which indeed the sea can be seen, but so can a great deal of the Attic countryside and much closer, Athens itself. Yet in gazing upon the unity of the Mediterranean, Attica disappears around him and the Orient coalesces and intoxicates in the chthonic seascape before him. From Attica, he gazes out upon the sea towards the “abyss” of Asia, yet of course from just outside the suburbs of Athens where this fantasy occurred it could only have been the Aegean he saw far before him. Facing this sea, the landscape around him has no power to act as a classical tableau and his will to resist is sapped.

Gazing upon the Mare Nostrum from Attica itself, he could only focus on an Orient with its “vague and brilliant unity, too much like confusion, I could not help myself from crying out within, ‘clarity, clarity! like in other matters one might cry ‘sensuality!’”\footnote{Maurras, \textit{Quand les Français ne s’aimaient pas}, p. 347. Maurras’s works can only describe classical reason in opposition to foreign barbarism, be it German, Jewish, or ‘Oriental’, whether in manifestos such as “Barbares et Romans” or in his more specific, yet curiously vague, definitions of Hellenic civilization: “What we seek in Greece is what gives it its privileged position in the antique and modern world, what distinguishes it from all the rest, what defines it as what it is and not Barbarism.” Maurras, \textit{Le Voyage d’Athènes}, as quoted in Jean-Claude Izzo and Thierry Fabre, \textit{La Méditerranée française} (Maisonneuve & Larose, 2000), p. 75.} But his gaze betrayed such a wish: “I dreamed of the mystical brazier of the Orient, fixed with lengthy looks and charged with a painful curiosity…” He returned down the mountain of Hymettus, but supposedly re-ascended ten times to gaze again upon the Orient/Sea, finally to
descend “staggering still like a man troubled by Asian wine.” In this strange Orientalist reverie at the heart of Greco-Latin tradition, Maurras exhibits many of the symptoms that Thomas Mann’s modernist and classicist character Aschenbach feels gazing upon the Mediterranean in Death in Venice. Harold Mah examines Mann’s strange classicism, specifically the classicizing gaze which supposedly helps construct the viewer as a rational subject, and yet collapses in indeterminacy and disorientation, as an agonistic yearning remains in the face of the essentially empty, imitative and impossible subjectivity that classicism promises. This Mediterranean, as experienced both by Maurras and Mann’s character Aschenbach, interrupts rational subjectivity, the classicizing gaze is met instead by an intoxicating sense of totality and absence. It is not classical but as each of these texts suggests, Oriental. An Oriental exoticism is not only a necessary opposite to classical subjectivity in the neo-traditional worldview. It is inevitable in the neo-classicist’s journey to delineating an ordered and self-sufficient identity with its roots in a classicism that is imitative in its essence: there remains always something foreign at its heart. Edward Said argued that Orientalism constructed an Orient that was empty except as an absence of what was European or Western. But Western subjectivity too was constructed as empty of meaning except in relation to the Orient. The Mediterranean is transformative but not because of its classical connotations, but in its Dionysian

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125 Maurras, Quand les Francais ne s’aimaient pas, p. 349.
disorienting and unifying features. As these neo-traditionalist neo-classicists like Barrès and Maurras surveyed the Mediterranean geographies of Greco-Latin civilization, they became further drawn to this shadowy idea that it instead vehicled an Oriental essence to which it was supposedly opposed by definition. The Greco-Latin roots of neo-traditionalist revitalization would always fail in finding an actual principle beyond imitation of the foreign by which to order civilization. For in arguing for its own coherent definition in opposition to that which was barbarian, neo-traditionalism was one of the most outwardly focused and ephemeral of identities. Had Mann, a noted Barrèsian even in his choice of Venice as a locale, actually read Maurras’ famous essays about Greece? If not, the coincidence in Maurras’ and Mann’s visions of a disorienting, disrupting and orientalized Mediterranean speaks to Harold Mah’s analysis of the “cultural longue durée” of a longstanding problematic in the classicizing gaze, from Winckelmann to Nietzsche to Mann, here embodied by the most anti-German xenophobe of France. For the avant-garde modernists seeking to quarantine all that was foreign from French authenticity, any journey to the roots of its classical civilization, in an era of the French conquest of Maghrib and Mashriq lands and peoples, led inevitably to its opposite in order to define the former. The classical gaze is revealed to instantly transform into an Oriental one, intoxicating Maurras in its mysterious vitalism. He is focused upon it even in (or especially in) his pilgrimage to the heart of the Hellenic-Latin world. This intoxicating slip from
classicism to Orientalism is an important component in the elaboration of a neo-traditionalist Greco-Latin heritage for France itself. It is only in gazing outward, and being gazed upon, that any coherence can be found into the classical roots of a fundamentally imitative French identity, one that is as much a fantasy as the oriental gaze reflected back by the Mediterranean Sea itself. Did this deconstructing disorientation interrupt colonialist assumptions by these neo-traditionalists? The answer seems to be no, in fact quite the opposite. It structured the colonialist narratives of regeneration we examine in more detail in subsequent chapters. The seduction of an Oriental root to classical origins seduced these intellectuals in an era in which colonial Mediterranean tourism was increasing in frequency. As France was elaborating a colonial policy which sought to integrate the Mashriq and Maghrib into Greater France, and neo-traditionalists sought to exert an authentic French identity for their reading public, its classical roots became ever more intertwined with exoticist fantasies of France’s own oriental essence.

But there is something more specific to a neo-traditionalist worldview going on here that relates to another origin in this colonial classicism. For here we also find Maurras of the avant-garde École Romane attributing an Oriental essence to many of the aesthetic aims and effects that he had ascribed as innovations of the preceding aesthetic movements of the Parnassians and Symbolists. In fact his vision of Asia looks very much like a realization of
Moréas’s and Gide’s earlier Symbolist manifestoes. For the neo-traditionalist tourists of the Mediterranean, theirs is not just an Orientalist fantasy in a general or vague sense, but a neo-traditionalist quarantining of Symbolist and other avant-garde aesthetic movements onto the Orient itself—and significantly, given the Romane’s southern-focused privileging of its classical traditionalism, the heart of France’s tradition, the Mediterranean. If neo-traditionalists repudiated the aesthetics of the Symbolists, they would keep returning to its seductive and transformative qualities and effects, and map these out over the colonial threshold of France’s conquests. Neo-traditionalist journeys to the orient, as in Bertrand’s works, would simultaneously be theses about resurrecting Symbolism and its regenerating effects upon a moribund French aesthetics, even as its foreignness had to be displaced to a location outside of France. And yet for the most xenophobic of critics like Maurras, at the heart of this neo-classicist reaction was the temptation of returning to the power of Symbolist innovation and syncretism that would regenerate French energies—an aesthetic anxiety mapped out over the geo-political realities of French colonial domination that these neo-classicists visited as tourists in a colonial era. In other words, like other intellectuals in the colonies neo-traditionalists looked to the classical past to understand the colonial present. And like other intellectuals they thought that beyond the colonial threshold existed a space beyond the decadent metropole in which French vitalism could be restored. However, the neo-traditionalists offered
a set of aesthetic aims and techniques by which a unifying political narrative of metropolitan regeneration would be realized, by journeys to the creative sources of French tradition: in the classical lyricism of the provincial countryside or colonial territories. Dionysian energies explored by the Symbolists were quarantined outside of what was properly French, but then by necessity had to be integrated, mastered and ordered back within an Apollonian French classicism in order to regenerate French energies.

Bertrand, like others of his generation of neo-traditionalists, was influenced by Barrès and later Maurras. Maurice Denis’s later paintings such as “Avallon, paysage au grande arbre” (1927), with ancient tree and ruin in the foreground and church spire in the background, could hardly be more clearly a meditation on the Barrèsian themes of rootedness and the cult of the dead. Likewise these two neo-traditionalists would be influenced by Bertrand, particularly in their later writings on North Africa and the Middle East, but also by his writings on the Ancien Régime.¹²⁶ But Bertrand also sought to delineate his classical and colonial visions from them within the fairly narrow set of neo-traditionalist preoccupations of the 1890s. A final group that was influential in this neo-traditionalist revival was the Naturistes, perhaps closest in temperament to Bertrand, but still distinct in this period of different movements seeking to establish themselves as the true voices of a nationalist revival inspired by these

¹²⁶ See Maurras’s entry on Louis Bertrand in the collection of his articles organized by Jean Pélissier, Dictionnaire politique et critique (Cahiers Charles Maurras, 1960).
Promethean artists. It was only at the turn of the century that Maurras’s royalist Action Française would emerge as the hegemonic aesthetic and political movement it was, with its emphasis on classicist literary and cultural criticism as political action—eventually supplemented with its violent paramilitary Camelots du Roi.

If neo-traditionalists, particularly those allied with Maurras, were ultimately successful, at least until after the First World War, in enmeshing French classicism with far-right reaction, there was nonetheless a considerable range of debate within the French classicist / neo-traditionalist chiasmus. Just as the École Romane reacted against the decadent Parnassians and Symbolists by elaborating a nationalist literature rooted in the imitation of Greco-Latin and Ancien Régime forms, another movement of the 1890s, a regionalist literary movement known as Naturisme, reacted against both the Symbolists on the one hand and the narrow classicist focus of the École Romane on the other. While still repudiating the decadence of the Parnassians, they championed their own nationalistic classicism. And like the École Romane, they were shaped by Provençal regionalist movements like the Félibrige; they searched for cultural traditions to re-root the French nation that was divided by class conflict, working class struggles for autonomy, and a nation still threatened by the ‘Eastern Barbarians’ across the Rhine. However, their combined classicism and nationalism was one that was more inclusive of French Romanticism,
Naturalism, and even selective Parnassians, than that of the exclusivist Romanes—in this respect, they were more like Barrès. The Naturistes emphasized a classical pastoralism, the lyrical qualities of nature that were the true source of classical genius. Classicists should turn to nature as a source just as the original classics had done, rather than merely imitate them slavishly. This was itself a classical trope implicit or explicit in the works of Du Bellay, Boileau, Winckelmann, and many other ‘classics’. Thus to mimic a classical past was to look again with fresh eyes to the same source of inspiration in nature, rather than to mimic the stale formulas of existing forms of classical antiquity as they believed was the case with the Romanes. In their lyrical evocations of nature, they like other regionalists privileged in particular the image of the peasant wedded to a traditional landscape, or worker who knew his place in the order of things. They called for artists to reenergize classicism by supplementing, through their art, the power of a lyrical pastoral provincial countryside and its poetic effects in transforming and regenerating a Latin people (again not unlike the climatic determinism popular in the sciences at the time). Just as a return to a particular climate and terrain would regenerate a degenerate people, its evocation through the genius of poets would do the same. In this critique of decadence and a call for national regeneration, the poet occupied the role of legislator in order to mediate this experience for urban peoples, and thus challenge the place of a decadent Republic in shaping the masses. It would be
seen, not inaccurately, as a classicism suffused with Romanticist tropes in the
eyes of Maurras. Maurras’ critique of the Naturistes as being neo-Romantics, a
critique which was also appreciative of many ideas they shared, is true from a
formal perspective, but French classiques Nisard and Sainte-Beuve had each, from
different perspectives, earlier defined Romanticism as merely a period of classical
renewal. Definitions of Romanticism and classicism were still hotly contested in
this period, and inasmuch as they are resolved today, it is only by, ironically,
continuing to assume a position closer to Maurras’ influential but exclusivist
definition of classicism. Another major difference with Maurras’ classicism was
that, unlike the Romanes, the Naturistes were mostly Dreyfusards, including
Gasquet—seemingly not for any concern for Dreyfus, but in their appreciation of
fellow Provençal Zola. For all their manifestos that promised to transform and
regenerate France itself, the core Naturistes never produced a major work, being
like the Romanes better theoreticians than artists. But they were nonetheless
influential on a whole generation of writers before World War I, whose members
included the central theoreticians Saint-Georges de Bouhélier and Maurice Le
Blond, but also included along its margins André Gide and Joachim Gasquet.

Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer believes Bertrand to be one of its key members. Certainly,
Cézanne believed Bertrand’s “La Renaissance classique” to be the best statement on
Naturisme.127 However, Bertrand, as he typically did, spilled bile in his condemnation of
the Naturistes as he had on Barrès and Maurras. By the early twentieth century,

127 Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, Cézanne en Provence, 221.
Naturistes, Romanes and independent figures like Bertrand were all publishing together in avant-garde journals like *Pays de France* and *La Renaissance Latine*, but by this time, Gasquet and Bertrand were increasingly drawing close to Maurras and his group of neo-traditionalist critics of the Action Française, including Alphonse Daudet’s son Léon Daudet.

The Naturistes were a movement seemingly of as many manifestos as poetic and prose writings. As Walter Adamson summarizes, de Bouhélier called for a “revival of the national spirit, a cult of the earth and of heroes, the consecration of civic energies, these are the sentiments that give to contemporary youth such a unique, unexpected and admirable character.”128 In de Bouhélier’s “La Révolution comme origine et comme fin du Naturisme,”129 he argues “Naturisme is much more an ethics than a doctrine of art.”130 The École Romane is too stifling and narrow in its vision of France and of classicism. He instead seeks to resurrect Romantic and indeed revolutionary figures: “Mirabeau, Robespierre, Napoléon, Auguste Comte and Émile Zola, such is the profound tradition we align with.”131 Just as German Idealists like Hegel had sought to inaugurate a philosophical revolution that would duplicate the benefits yet mitigate the need for France’s political revolution, the Naturistes could complete France’s unfinished political revolution that had become decadent in the Third Republic by aesthetically

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regenerating the French. This process of regeneration would be achieved in a complex inter-relationship between artist, people and nature: “…there is between the people and the poet, and the poet and the plebe a continual admirable and rapid exchange.”132 The poet creates order and builds the people to a revolt against the present degeneration. In fulfilling the spirit of the Revolution, the poet will create a new one—but this was not a republican or a Marxist formulation—but a reactionary one against the existing ‘legal’ republic (a distinction Maurras shared) for a True France that had been lost. The poets were the new revolutionaries who would undo the damage of the republic and reawaken in people their primitive and primal classical heroism through the Naturistes’ lyrical celebration of nature. In the same issue of La Plume, Maurice Leblond, Zola’s son-in-law and co-founder of Naturisme, positioned this movement in opposition to the Symbolists, whom he saw were part of the family of romantic decadents who wrote for writings’ sake, fixated on a love of archaic exoticism for the foreign, “never do they claim to accord their thought to the sentiments of their era, to the soul of the nation.”133

132 Ibid. p. 657.
133 Maurice Le Blond, “La Crise littéraire et la Naturisme,” La Plume, no. 8, 1897, p. 206. Le Blond did not want “a resuscitation of the experimental novel dear to the Naturalists. But I believe the great positive theories of Auguste Comte and Darwin, of Taine and Karl Haeckel, have little by little penetrated our awareness. The efforts of these great thinkers have contributed to people being rid of the last vestiges of the spiritualism that encumbered them. Thus we have intuitively acquired the intellect of the Races and the civic constitution.” Although Naturism and the École Romane had obvious points in common, Le Blond found that the École Romane was too fixated on archaic style, rather than content, which should be changing the language as well as the thoughts of the masses. Maurice Le Blond, “La Crise littéraire et la Naturisme,” La Plume, no. 8, 1897, p. 210.
Many of the 1890s avant-garde writers moved from an aesthetic program to various political programs calling for a renewal of French morals. The Naturistes violently disagreed with the École Romane’s call for a return to classical formalism, and the Naturiste manifestos and publications are explicit in their repudiation of the Romanes as much as the Parnassians and Symbolists, but both Romanes and Naturistes agreed that artists should restore in French people traditional and hierarchical spiritual values, whether they be in the institutions of Catholicism according to Maurras, or a Renaissance-based pagan antiquity according to many Naturistes. But both agreed that these values were rooted in a Helleno-Latin origin and French Ancien Régime.\footnote{134} In his essay on Naturisme, Gasquet argued that Zola and Cézanne had expressed “the sun-filled delights of the Aixois country.”\footnote{135} Provence was infused with the classicism of Greece. Zola owed this land his genius. For Gasquet, the poet was the regenerating legislator opposed to republican decadence and class-based revolution:

The destinies of France are to us in the end more dear than humanitarian utopias. Lamartine and Hugo sang the Marseillaise of Peace; we await truly national poets. Poets, said Saint-Georges de Bouhélier, ‘must accentuate an aspect of the race. They preserve tradition. They perpetuate an heroic design, they direct exploits. They realise desires.’\footnote{136}

Anne-Marie Thiesse sums up their project well:

\footnote{134} “Paganism is hierarchical pantheism; it is aristocratic and sane. As Charles Maurras puts very well, paganism is to be wise.” Joachim Gasquet, “Notes pour servir à l’Histoire du Naturisme,” La Plume, no. 8, 1897, p. 674.
\footnote{135} Ibid., p. 672.
\footnote{136} Ibid., p. 673.
The Naturiste manifesto, in its manifest hatred for the Republic, in its intellectual xenophobia hostile to the people of the the North and East, recalls the proclamations of the École Romane launched a few years earlier by the Symbolist poet of Greek origin Jean Moréas, and taken up by Charles Maurras. But in contrast to the romanes, the naturistes called for a national classicism writ large, that did not exclude Romanticism.  

The Naturistes did not last long as a movement, which in part explains their relative obscurity today. Many individuals like Gide or Bertrand drew from the shared ideas of, and debates by the avant-garde and Provençal regionalists of the period, which influenced the Romanes and Naturistes as well. They met together, they wrote together. Some like Gasquet and Bertrand would draw closer to Maurras’ Action Française in the early twentieth century, as they reconverted to a conservative Catholicism; others like Gide would move on to found other more ‘ecumenical’ (albeit nationalist) classicist movements, most famously within the confines the Nouvelle Revue Française. Nevertheless, Naturistes, Romanes and other classicists continued to share enough similarities and interests to appear in the same journals early in the new century, including La Renaissance Latine, to which Bertrand contributed. It was an appropriately titled, albeit ephemeral,

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137 Thiesse, Écrire la France, p. 20.
138 Already in 1901, Bertrand wrote to his friend Émile Baumann that “I am identifying more with the Catholic idea, not so much as a religion, but inasmuch as a complete system of knowledge. I am discovering more and more the insufficiency of lay science. You’ll see that I’ll end up in the skin of a tula [normalien jargon for a catholic conservative attending the Ecole Normale Superieure]”. However, it was only by 1906 that he announced himself as having had his epiphany — in his journey to the Levant. According to Richard Seabold, in the 1860s, over 78 percent of students were liberal Bonapartists. By the 1870s, this figure dropped to under 2 percent of students. From the 1870s until WWI, most normalien alumni were conservative republicans, a fairly representative group of France generally, at least politically. Richard Seabold, Normalien Alumni in the Facultés et Lycées of France from 1871 to 1910 promotions 1831 to 1869 (Ph.D. Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1970), p. 173.
journal of the period in which his influential essay “La Renaissance classique” appeared in 1903. Bonner Mitchell suggests that based on its particular classicism, Gide’s *Les Nourritures Terrestres* can be considered the unofficial masterpiece of the Naturisme movement (in which, it should be noted, the protagonist finds his own liberation not in the lyrical countryside of Provence, but on the other side of the Mediterranean, on a tourist journey to a lyrical Algeria as he also crisscrosses national, regional and colonial settings). However, Bertrand’s thesis, and his early novels also set in Algeria, share many of the same concerns as the Naturistes, Romanes, and the debates within the period’s classicist renaissance generally. His novels are the inauguration of a ‘colonial’ literature, and they are simultaneously the apotheosis of debates about classicism and Latinité in an age of French imperialism.

**Conclusion**

Many of the 1890s avant-garde writers moved from an aesthetic to political program calling for a renewal of French morals in the face of metropolitan decadence. The Naturistes violently disagreed with the École Romane’s call for a return to classical formalism, and the Naturisme manifestos

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139 Nina Maria Athanassoglou-Kallmyer traces Gasquet and others’ classicist evolution to *Pays de France* (1899-1909) as well: “*Pays de France* was the mouthpiece of the Institut Saint-Thomas d’Aquino, a Catholic and nationalist association to which Gasquet and members of his circle, Dumesnil, Louis Bertrand, and Maurras, belonged. First issued under the joint editorship of Gasquet and the Aix lawyer Jean-Marie Demolins (the same Demolins who had defended Provençal regional crafts in Mistral’s *L’Aïoli*), *Pays de France* was an advocate of the joint forces of nationalism and regionalism, often featuring or referring to Barrès’s writings” Nina Maria Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne and Provence*, p. 292n.

and publications are explicit in their repudiation of the Romanes as much as the Parnassians. But both xenophobic Romanes and Naturistes agreed that artists should restore traditional values among French people. All agreed that these values were rooted in antiquity, latent in the blood of the French race, and both were, at least initially, strongly tied to regionalist movements of Provence reacting against a Paris in which they inevitably felt outsiders—outsiders of Parisian cosmopolitan culture and capital.\textsuperscript{141}

In this crucial period of the 1890s, when Bertrand was writing his thesis, the contemporary conception of French national identity, synonymous with classicism, was reshaped and refashioned in its modern French formulation—and it was no accident that it was among neo-traditionalists that this formulation was initially advanced. This vision of French tradition, born in many ways at the margins of Parisian avant-garde life as part of a neo-classicist reaction, came to dominate conceptions of national identity in France for a diverse field of intellectuals coming out of this avant-garde subculture, including Bertrand, André Gide, Julien Benda, Paul Valéry, Charles Maurras, Maurice Barrès and others, and was manifest in their writings as much as their tourist itineraries to sites of Greek and Roman antiquity, as it was also evident in school curricula and pedagogical debates at the time. Gide engaged in frequent quarrels with Barrès and Maurras, most famously the \textit{Querelle du peuplier}, but their different

\textsuperscript{141} Thiesse, \textit{Écrire la France}, passim.
definitions of the nation obscure the fact that they each agreed on a number of classicist principles, which were further agreed to be synonymous with the nation and French nationalism. Benda who like Gide, Camus’s mentor Jean Grenier, or dramatist Jacques Copeau, was an important contributor to the classicist *Nouvelle Revue Française*, was a fierce critic of Maurras and Barrès, but he too was a classicizing nationalist. And in fact, many intellectuals who initially formulated the program of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* were deeply influenced by and onetime members of the Naturistes, the Romanes, and the neo-traditionalist avant-garde. French classicism in the 1890s was a privileged site for national identity itself, tied to Revanchisme, frequently defined against a foreign and orientalized barbarism. And it is in this context that Bertrand’s earliest works, written and realized in his movements across the colonial Mediterranean, are better understood.

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142 For a collection of articles relevant to this debate, see André Gide, *Prétextes, reflexions sur quelques points de littérature et de morale* (Mercure de France, 1929).
CHAPTER THREE

From Classicism to Colonialism: Louis Bertrand’s Algeria

“The Arab brought with him only poverty, anarchy and barbarism.”
-Louis Bertrand, Preface to Le Sang des races

“I am a barbarian, an intoxicated cosmopolitan, especially since I have seen the
void that is your cities and fatherlands! Furthermore, I am convinced that it is
barbarism that will bring back the Old World. The colonial wars are bringing it
forth.”
-Louis Bertrand in a letter to Provençal poet Joachim Gasquet.

“For me, barbarism is rejuvenation”
-Paul Gauguin, Écrits d’un sauvage

Louis Bertrand was born in 1866 in Metz, Lorraine. A studious child from a
relatively prosperous family, he remembered hating his fellow pupils whom he
felt had persecuted him out of jealousy of his privileged social standing.1 In
Third Republic France, there were increasing expectations among the middle-
classes for social mobility, not only in terms of wealth and choice of profession,

1 Little is known about Bertrand’s youth except for what he wrote in his self-fashioning memoirs
which he began in the 1920s. Odile Husson observes this biographic problem in studying him.
Husson argues, out of necessity, that these works can nonetheless serve in their ‘broad
brushstrokes’ for an understanding of his life. Odile Husson, Lorraine et Afrique dans l’oeuvre de
Louis Bertrand (Nancy Société d’impressions typographiques, 1966). This problem in biographies
of Bertrand is evident in Rabah Belamri’s otherwise brilliant analysis of Bertrand’s Algerian
works. Belamri, L’Oeuvre de Louis Bertrand. Belamri relies especially on the memoirs La Nouvelle
education sentimentale and Mes Années d’apprentissage, both written in the 1930s, to provide context
for his Algerian writings of the fin-de-siècle. Yet his memoirs were begun on the eve of his
ascension to the rank of immortel at the Académie Francaise, and continued until his death in
1941. They reveal a Bertrand increasingly pessimistic about the future of France and Europe, and
increasingly drawn to fascism as a solution for Europe’s problems.
but in terms of moving from village and town to city, particularly for those admitted to the prestigious Parisian lycées and eventually one of the Grandes Écoles. Bertrand did well. He arrived in Paris with a scholarship, graduated from Lycée Henri IV a few years ahead of André Gide and other avant-garde writers. He was admitted to the École Normale Supérieure where, according to his memoirs, he devoted himself to the classics. His instructors were a notable collection of some of the leading scholars of Belle Époque France: Gaston Paris, Ferdinand Brunetière, Gaston Boissier and Gabriel Tarde. In 1891 Bertrand moved from Provence, where he had been already teaching, to take a position across the sea at the Lycée d’Alger. He left behind networks of young avant-garde writers and artists in Paris and the south of France with whom he was beginning to establish connections. Colonial Algeria, however, despite a number of colonial periodicals, scholars and scientific societies, did not yet have the critical mass for an avant-garde movement of its own. He nonetheless made several friends—almost all scholars—including the archaeologist Stéphane Gsell. By the turn of the century he was back in France, seeking employment as a writer and critic and seeking escape from the difficulties of teaching. He had published some articles and novels, of which Le Sang des Races was then his most famous. It was his old university professor Brunetière who offered him an extraordinary opportunity: to tour the Mediterranean and recount his travels in the pages of the most prestigious conservative French journal: Revue des Deux Mondes. This
colonial peregrination gave him the financial independence and prestige he sought. Bertrand was one of the most frequent contributors to the journal, which no doubt helped his ascension to the Académie Française in 1925, fittingly filling the chair left vacant by Barrès’s death. From the mid-1920s until his death in 1941, he devoted much of his time to his expansive memoirs. He also participated in some of the most important moments in far-right political culture of the inter-war period: from speaking at the Nationalist International and the Second Volta Conference, to giving the inaugural address to the Cercle Fustel de Coulanges or sitting with dignitaries at the Nuremberg Rallies.

This chapter examines the specific ways in which a neo-traditionalist world-view was constructed in Louis Bertrand’s early writings. Bertrand’s works were much more important to the development of fin-de-siècle classicism and latinité than have often been credited. His neo-traditionalism distinguished itself in its continued championing of Symbolist idealism throughout the 1890s, in a period in which most other neo-traditionalists, such as Charles Maurras, were forming their neo-classicist movements in opposition to this earlier movement, as

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2 From the mid-1920s until his death, his published works were largely either collections of earlier published essays, or books in an autobiographical series he titled ‘Une Destinée’: at once a highly personal and romanticized account of his life, and at the same time, with an obvious solipsism, the “intellectual, moral and sentimental history of a generation.” Louis Bertrand, “Avertissement” in Jean Perbal (Fayard, 1925). Each book in this series comprised several years of his life: Jean Perbal (from his birth in 1866 until he entered the lycée c. 1877); La Nouvelle éducation sentimentale (Plon, 1928) (his lycée years until university in the late 1880s), Hippolyte porte-couronnes (Fayard, 1932), Sur les routes du Sud (1936) of his years in Provence and Algeria in the late 1880s and 1890s), Mes années d’apprentissage (Fayard, 1938) (from the end of his stay in Algeria until his 1906 tour of the Mediterranean for the Revue des Deux Mondes), and Jérusalem. The earlier volumes focused on the pseudonymous main character Jean Perbal who Bertrand narrates as eventually encountering an older Louis Bertrand—with his youthful alter-ego acting as a muse for the elder academician.
well as to each other, in an attempt to mark their specific brand of neo-classicism as the dominant neo-traditionalist model for regenerating France. Bertrand was nonetheless highly influential. Alphonse Roche’s 1954 study of “L’Idée Latine” observes that Bertrand’s writings were central to many meridional regionalists like Charles Méré and Fernand Gauzy in elaborating Latinité as a doctrine. Bertrand’s work was also significant for simultaneously extending the idea of the Latin races beyond the Mistralien confines of Provence, Italy or Catalunya and across and along the shores of the colonial Mediterranean. It is thus worth examining the manner in which a neo-traditionalist world-view was constructed in his early writings. Louis Bertrand’s first two major works, the neo-classicist study La Fin du classicisme et le retour à l’antique dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle et les premières années du XIX en France and his novel Le Sang des Races, are never examined together despite being written in an immediate and overlapping sequence in the closing years of the nineteenth century. It is only by examining each work closely, and examining each in relation to the other, that a better understanding of neo-traditionalism as a broader movement, as well as Bertrand’s role, becomes clear. Le Sang des races has received the most attention of Bertrand’s works due to its privileged position in setting the stage for Algerian settler aesthetic movements like the Algérianistes. It is also a key work in 1890s

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avant-garde writing. This latter aspect is ignored by scholars who quarantine its significance to the southern side of the colonial Mediterranean. But it is precisely in Bertrand’s application of avant-garde techniques and neo-traditionalist concerns to a work on Latin regeneration in *Algeria*, that the building-blocks for a key myth of French national regeneration was written. This was not a work that was initially intended as a colonial novel. It was a neo-classical, avant-garde novel that sought to assimilate administrative and scholarly research on Algeria into a narrative of national regeneration. His novel applied the lessons he set out in his neo-classicist thesis *La Fin du classicisme*, itself a work which is never considered relevant to French colonialism. Yet this thesis is likewise quarantined, in this case to the northern side of the Mediterranean. In fact it is, like neo-traditionalist writing in general, informed by French colonial concerns. It adapts a neo-classical aesthetics that would look to fantasies of foreign barbarism, savagery and colonialism as a source for regenerating France as a fin-de-siècle cultural power—a cultural revitalization that would, like the better-known programs of the École Romanes and Naturistes, seek to regenerate French politics as well. However, Bertrand’s contribution to this set of cultural fantasies was nonetheless distinct, not least in that it was still immersed in Symbolist idealism in a period in which many other neo-classicists were forming new neo-classical movements in opposition to this earlier avant-garde movement, and to each other. In short, Bertrand’s two early works are divided in scholarly impressions
and responses across a colonial quarantine: one is relevant to French culture, the
other to settler culture. But to understand the inter-relationship of these two
segmented topics for transnational intellectuals like Bertrand, and thus the ways
in which neo-traditionalist ideas circulated in the fin-de-siècle, it is important to
approach these two works like a chiasmus: one is a neo-classical theory informed
by a French colonial fantasies, the other fantasizes the colony according to a neo-
classical theory.

Rebarbarization as National Regeneration

If we examine the body of scholarly research on his work, it would seem
there are at least two distinct Bertrands. One is the foundational colonial novelist
of Algeria, who almost like a classical legislative figure appears for a time in the
1890s to constitute the conventions of later settler literary movements in Algeria
before returning to France. The other is the neo-traditionalist, and over the
course of the inter-war period, increasingly fascist intellectual who published
extensively in Revue des Deux Mondes, La Revue Universelle, and in the 1930s,
Candide. The former Bertrand has received considerable attention recently, the

5 The pivotal influence of Bertrand’s early novels upon settler intellectual culture has been, to the
best of my knowledge, discussed in every study of settler intellectual culture. Some of the more
enlightening studies have included Patricia Lorcin, “Decadence and Renascence: Louis Bertrand
and the concept of Rebarbarisation in Fin de siècle Algeria,” in New Perspectives on the Fin de siècle
in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century France, edited by Kay Chadwick and Timothy Unwin (The
Edwin Mellen Press); Rabah Belamri, L’Oeuvre de Louis Bertrand; Peter Dunwoodie, Writing French

6 As a writer who was associated with, but not of, the Action Française, Bertrand’s work in France
has received less attention. Notable exceptions include Stephen Wilson; Martha Hanna’s
latter relatively little. As one has waxed, the other has waned. And yet this is a reversal of how he was received in the inter-war period. This chapter instead examines his early works, typically quarantined the one from the other.

It is no accident that Patricia Lorcin’s and Stephen Wilson’s excellent studies of Bertrand—one focused on the novelist in Algeria, the other on the neo-traditionalist historian in France—each emphasize the importance of his concept of rebarbarization.\(^7\) Rebarbarization, a term Bertrand applied in later works but whose strategies were already evident in his earliest writings, was for Bertrand an aesthetic and political salvation for France. It is not surprising that this preoccupation with rebarbarization is evident in his earliest writings, including *Le Sang des Races*, as it was constructed with an eye to other neo-traditionalist fantasies of Latinité and barbarism. Bertrand admitted to Barrès that *Le Sang des races* was, like *Déracinés*, answering man’s need to be defined by his tie to the land, though Bertrand, born in Lorraine, with Spanish blood, felt that “my true fatherland is tied to the soil of Algeria, that ambiguous country where the Latin races mix.”\(^8\) Rebarbarization was a process by which overly civilized Latin

celebrated *The Mobilization of Intellect* discusses Bertrand’s First World War propaganda and organizing in detail, but does not connect him to earlier or later elements of his life and writing. For a discussion on this Royalist historiography and its impact on French culture, see William R. Keylor, *Jacques Bainville and the Renaissance of Royalist History in Twentieth-Century France* (Louisiana State University Press, 1979); see also Stephen Wilson, “History and Traditionalism: Maurras and the Action Française,” in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. xxix, no. 3 (July-September, 1968).


\(^8\) Fonds Barrès, 18 lettres de Louis Bertrand à Maurice Barrès, BNF manuscrit.
races—French, Spanish, Italian—in a struggle against the Barrêssian-inflected barbarism of their opponents, would become revivified and would regenerate within themselves an originary and barbarous Latin genius for conquest. This Latin genius, energized in communion with an originary but forgotten Greco-Latin barbarism, had been rendered dormant among the contemporary metropolitan Latin peoples. Their vitality had been sapped by decadent cosmopolitanism and social division in their home countries. Rebarbarization was an aesthetic-political strategy of regeneration effected by Bertrand by opposing but also mimicking the existential enemies of Latin civilization: in Bertrand’s era, Germans, Jews, Communists, and Muslims above all. By opposing, and yet matching, their enemies’ ‘barbarism’, all the while retaining a classical filiation to a Greco-Latin past vehicled through French civilization, the individual French metropolitan or settler would participate in regenerating the French nation, region and colony—at least as Bertrand’s work willed it.

Bertrand’s aesthetic-political strategy of rebarbarization refashioned a degenerated modern French identity in mimicry of colonized subjects and simultaneously in imitation of classical antiquity. According to Bertrand’s colonial fantasies, settlers were to reawaken within themselves a Latin barbarism opposed to a putative Muslim barbarism. Rebarbarized settlers no longer feared Muslims as their nemesis, but by mimicking their supposed savagery, settlers were prepared to conquer them in a hostile environment. The settlers’ Latin roots were
re-energized in this struggle, as they refashioned their race through intermarriage between Spanish, French and Italian cultural inheritors of Greco-Latin antiquity, and through energetic struggle in the colony. Bertrand’s classicism was also obsessed with the problem of imitation and autonomy. The Latin generative genius should, in imitation of the Renaissance, seek from all sources that which will activate the Latins’ inherent creative energies, rather than slavishly copy established forms. If imitation was practiced too well by mimicking classical form and content (as the École Romane were accused of by other neo-traditionalists), it had the effect of the French losing what their spiritual ancestors possessed: originary genius, vitality and autonomy—a real abyss of imitation for neo-traditionalists equating literary classicism with the vivacity and genius of the French nation, an abyss from which the aesthetic, and political, program of neo-traditionalists was nonetheless fashioned. Mimicking foreign barbarism in a struggle for supremacy served to resolve what contemporaries worried was the inherently derivative nature classical imitation. Like their classical forebears, they would reach outside themselves to discover what was within them. These classicists constructed colonial fantasies that served this classical crisis of imitation, and simultaneously served as neo-classicist vehicles for French colonial fantasies.

The Colonial “School of Energy”
Bertrand’s vision of Algeria became particularly popular because of its utility to different aesthetic and political organizations that followed him, organizations that were also seeking to capitalize on his relative fame as a propagandist for colonial Algeria and his works’ neo-traditionalist regenerative fantasies. But before we closely examine the neo-classicist means by which he crafted his influential colonial/classicist fantasies of a new settler Latin race in formation, it is worth discussing other contemporary fantasies about a new race in formation in Algeria. It is important not to imagine Bertrand’s work, any more than Barrès’s or Maurras’s in regards to France, as somehow unique or actually creating a political basis for Latin unity through his art. To do so is to imbibe the fantasies of a promethean artist shaping a people into existence, a core element of the neo-traditionalist world-view if not exclusive to neo-traditionalists. Instead, his vision was selected against a host of others, including the satirical realist vision of Algeria in Alphonse Daudet’s Tartarin de Tarascon or the new communities of exilic nomads imagined in André Gide’s North African novels. There were others much closer to his own, such as the thesis of settler regeneration advanced by fellow Barrèssian, the future Commissaire-résident Général of Morocco, Hubert Lyautey. Lyautey’s life would mirror Bertrand’s in several ways, including his involvement with far-right organizations before his death.9 Lyautey imagined that the settlers, living in a semi-militarized zone of

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9 Bertrand would later come to know Lyautey, though the former, by then close to Maurras, was nonetheless taken aback by the latter’s penchant for public displays of race-baiting. During World
colonial occupation, had been transformed by this environment and were no longer like metropolitan civilians. They were possessed of particular qualities of the colony that transformed them. His was also a vitalist vision of Algerian settlers, not along racial lines, but according to their undecidable civil status, as they took on roles that were neither quite civilian nor military. He compared them to the Boers in South Africa, farmers who were able to fight the English to a standstill—like the classical militia of Machiavelli’s *L’Arte della Guerra*. The colony is a state of exception according to Lyautey, a colony “in which we search for the demarcation [between military and civilian] in vain... Of those who have been submitted to this harsh school, some turn back immediately, but in others there results a special being that is no longer military, nor civilian, but who is, 

War I, Bertrand, like Lyautey, was sent on a diplomatic mission to gauge and encourage Spanish support for France. In 1915, Bertrand left for Spain, at the request of Joseph Reinach, who wrote under the name Polybe, to win over the Catholics and monarchists to the French cause against Germany. He met with Alphonse XIII, who had also met with Lyautey that year, to discuss, without resolution, French and Spanish claims in Morocco. Bertrand, *Mes Ambassades* (Fayard, 1954), p. 121-134  Lyautey would write of this trip to Spain, and his pilgrimage to Barrès’ Toledo. Bertrand found that the Spanish he met, that is, Spanish Catholic and monarchist elites, admired Germany more than France: “In the eyes of our neighbours, Germany represented European civilization, even civilization itself, with its sense of hierarchy, its respect of intellectual and spiritual values, its double aspect of Christian monarchy and utilitarian organization. It represented, in any case, less a danger than egalitarian, materialist and revolutionary France. Revolution was regression. From the moment we had abandoned the superior form of civilization that had fashioned French prestige in monarchic times, Kultur seemed less a peril for the hispanic tradition. Thus thought the majority of Spanish. In vain I repeated that traditional France still lived...”*Mes embassades*, p. 142. Afterwards, Bertrand returned to Paris, where he met Lyautey at the home of what Bertrand called “an Israeli baron’s, prince of Finance.” Lyautey and Bertrand remained after the other guests had left, and Lyautey suddenly pulled from his pocket a letter from his nephew who was presently in ‘Constantinople’. Lyautey enthusiastically read a lyrical poem from the letter titled ‘*Hymne à la Croix!*’. According to Bertrand, it was a poem on the “triumph of the Cross over the Crescent. I noticed the effect of this poetry upon this pious Jewish family [...] I asked myself later if he had not done this on purpose, he was certainly capable of such.” *Mes Ambassades*, p. 143-4.
simply enough, the settler.” Frantz Fanon would later explore the effects of this colonial militarized zone on Algerians as well as settlers. Fanon was interested in Algerians’ struggles to move beyond these categories. Lyautey’s model of the settler emphasized their special status as semi-militarized, rather than semi-barbarized as according to Bertrand, but as with Bertrand, it aimed to provide an overseas example of national regeneration for audiences in the metropole, a recurring feature of literature on the colony in this period which saw the birth of a neo-traditionalist world-view. With Lyautey and Bertrand, we see the other side of the barbed wire of the colony, and its effects in producing a new man in the modern era—as we see in the next chapter, what Bertrand called his “master race” of Algerian settlers.

Although French colonialism in the 1880s and 1890s was often associated with Jules Ferry’s republican politics and the Third Republic generally, Barrès had as early as 1890 celebrated French colonialism as an example of French genius and conquest. Bertrand’s ideas, though they depended on the conceit of an individual artist producing and shaping a people, in fact reflected the interests of:

11. This preoccupation with the colony as a site of regeneration was central to many neo-traditionalist formulations. Paul Adam’s Notre Carthage (1922) argues that traces of Carthaginian civilization could be found in West African cultures, and thus put it in the orbit of French (and Latin) hegemony—this is not far off the arguments advanced by Onésime Reclus in Lâchons l’Asie, prenons l’Afrique: comment renaitre? et comment durer? (1904) in which it is the duty of France to propagate its Latin linguistic heritage into Africa as Rome had. Adam’s neo-traditionalist colonialism was not unlike Bertrand’s and Barrès’s views justifying the French conquest of North Africa and the Middle East, respectively.
and preoccupations of an entire subculture of French intellectuals moving between national, regional, and colonial contexts. Algeria became what Bertrand called in *Le Jardin de la mort*, a “school of energy,” echoing Barrès calling Taine a “professor of energy” for leading a generation of students to greater sensation and experience.\(^\text{13}\) These ideas fashioned the colony as a liminal zone of intensified experiences which transform the settler into a new man for the modern age, a modernist work of art forged in violence, dispossession and race war that will regenerate humanity and purify metropolitan rot. This vision of the settler as nemesis has striking parallels to discussions of European soldier solidarization in the trenches of the Great War. The mobilization of intellectuals during the First World War found Bertrand as one of the chief advocates of a regenerative war for civilization, in which the Latin races, but now in a European setting, were being forged together as a new people in martial conflict against barbarism. Bertrand’s and other colonial fantasists’ ideas, of a classless, masculine race solidarizing in opposition to a foreign barbarism, and whose example would regenerate France, would find a new setting for this virile modernism on the battlefields of Europe. This existential struggle was no longer produced in the “laboratory” of the colony, but in the heart of Europe. These debates, beginning in the colony, and imported to France during the war, strongly echo Mussolini’s famous notion of a ‘Trenchocracy’, that is, a new

\(^{13}\) According to Bertrand, the title was symbolic of an ancient country, touched by death, that was coming to being reborn. Bertrand, *Le Jardin de la mort* (1921), p. 229.
classless elite forged in the trenches by barbed wire, steel and blood, who would return to a decadent civilian setting and reenergize it. If the First World War was, as Enzo Traverso puts it, “truly the laboratory of the twentieth century,” the site of transformation, of producing the modern being, the discourse about this transformative experience, of a new man formed in totalizing, existential, and mechanized violence was a transference of colonial ideology of the becoming masculine body onto European shores. This notion of the colony as a school of energy, a source of metropolitan regeneration, was central to Bertrand’s ideas on colonialism and Latinité, a laboratory for Latin virtue. It was not solely his invention. His belief in the colony as a school of energy reflected the interests of French elites who had been assimilated to the dreams of colonial expansion, revenge against Germany, and French glory, often within the aesthetic-political framework of regeneration and vitalism. Alfred de Tarde had even used the term “school of energy” in the title of his study of Hubert Lyautey’s administration of Morocco. The fantasy of the nation’s regeneration was most realized among those Europeans who had, as Lyautey put it, “submitted to this harsh school.” Bertrand’s fantasy of a regenerated Latin race was of a people forged in

14 Traverso, *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, p. 20. Although Traverso does not dwell on the similarities between fantasies of self produced in World War I and earlier settler and soldier fantasies in the colony, he notes how the war condensed colonial stereotypes of the colonized onto European ones—the ‘Boche’ barbarians, the colonial troops fighting as “cannibals.” *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, p. 99
existential combat against a barbarous enemy—in the doubled sense that their lives depended on this combat, but also their cohesion as a race.

Bertrand’s classicism, like the aesthetic programs of other avant-garde neo-traditionalists, was suffused with the notion that the modern decadent era needed new myths from which to construct a new vibrant, heroic and energized reality upon the ruins and corpses of a decaying civilization. From the nineteenth to the twentieth century, in the midst of genocide and dispossession, Algeria, this colonie de peuplement, this laboratory of French vitalism and virtue, came to mean everything to propagandists of French national regeneration. For colonial neo-traditionalists, Algeria became the very salvation of a French modernity.

Bertrand’s own self-publicizing efforts should not confuse one’s understanding of how his work on Latin vitalism on African shores fit more broadly into the preoccupations of other intellectuals on both sides of the colonial Mediterranean. Vitalism and energy were clichés, or at least mots clefs, of the neo-traditionalists. Nabis Maurice Denis was, like Bertrand, Paul Adam or Gide, an avant-garde theorist who moved from the Symbolist movement to the neoclassicist revival in the early twentieth century, and like Bertrand sought to bridge these movements. Both Bertrand and Denis were important theorists of the neo-traditionalist revival. Bertrand developed his aesthetic ideas already advanced in La Fin du classicisme further in neo-classicist journals like La Renaissance Latine. One of Denis’ more famous essays on French aesthetics was
published in the neo-classicist *L’Occident* in 1909: “De Gauguin et de Van Gogh au Classicisme.” In it Denis paid homage to the Symbolists who had paved the way for the neo-classicist revival of the early twentieth century by demolishing Naturalism and focusing the artist on fashioning new forms of older myths:

> We are indebted to the barbarians, to the primitives of 1890, for bringing certain essential truths back into focus. Not to *reproduce* nature and life by approximations or by improvised *trompe-l’oeils*, but on the contrary to reproduce our emotions and our dreams by *representing* them with harmonious forms and colours—that, I continue to believe, was a new way of posing the problem of art—at least for our time; and it’s an idea that still bears fruit.16

For Denis, and as we shall see Bertrand, a neo-classicist Symbolism rebarbarized French culture. Symbolism provided a more virile and creative basis from which to build a neo-classical revival—a regeneration of French aesthetics that mirrored and shaped French national regeneration, just as Bertrand had applied this aesthetic-political world-view to his vision of the settler.

**A Neo-Classicism between Aesthetic Movements**

*Bertrand’s thesis, La Fin du classicisme et le retour à l’antique, is at first glance an idiosyncratic place to begin in understanding this notable colonial and later fascist advocate. It has barely been mentioned in all the studies of Bertrand. It could be assumed to be a precursor of his colonial writing, but surely not a colonial work itself. Yet it was this work that not only established many of his*

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ideas on French culture, but of colonialism as well. It is a thesis that combines in its composite structure an avant-garde neo-traditionalism with reactionary and colonialist motifs. The ways in which these ideas were forged is worth close analysis, not least as a way for better understanding the development of a neo-traditionalist world-view.

His thesis begins by uncontroversially defining classicism as having a particular essence; that essence, and its fundamental principle, is imitation. However, to root an exclusivist and xenophobic French authenticity in imitation, as neo-traditionalist classicists normally did, exacerbated the inherent paradoxes of identity to a heightened point that is rarely focused on by intellectual historians of France. Rather than these paradoxes serving to interrupt colonialist or reactionary programs, they in fact formed the very constituent basis of a French neo-traditionalist colonial and reactionary world-view. Louis Bertrand’s work is of particular interest because of how important it was to later settler and fascist intellectuals in the colony and metropole, and how his ideas were appropriated more generally by fascist and colonial organizations. It is thus worth examining in greater detail how these paradoxes were assembled into his particular aesthetic-political strategies for regenerating the French nation. In the following chapter we look to his later works and how they ‘caught up’ to, and came to be coterminous, with fascism. But first, to better appreciate how much he adapted his aesthetic-political strategies over time to different social and political
contexts opportunities, it is worth examining how he initially framed these ideas, in his thesis on classicism and his first colonial novel.

Although his thesis develops both a history and theory of classicism that is in some ways original, this definition, that classicism is imitation, is as standard or classic as can be, and has its origins in much earlier French debates about a classic literature in the sixteenth century. But many of the implications of such a definition, as it applies to the study of French identity in the 1890s, would be unravelled in this work to apply not only to a Greco-Roman classical past, but imitation of foreign barbarism as well. In his thesis, all backwards-looking examples of Romanticism, classicism, and antiquarianism are critiqued and judged failures by virtue of their lack of vitalism and cultural creativity. It is a strange work of classical scholarship that repudiates all conventions while seeking a return to, or rather a refashioning of, tradition. A French classical renaissance, in order not to a be stale rehashing of a previous classical revival, must look to contemporary examples in foreign literatures, and French society, to better imitate the freshness and novelty of earlier classical renaissances. In particular, instead of mimicking dead precedent, it argues for the mimicry of, and opposition to, the image of foreign barbarism. As we will see, imitation of otherness is one of Bertrand’s organizing principles through which he would elaborate French Latin identities—a colonial mimicry on either side of the Mediterranean both opposed to, and in imitation of, foreign contamination.
La Fin du classicisme is a complex work, operating on at least two levels simultaneously. First, it is a history of French classicism that resembles Hippolyte Taine and Ferdinand Brunetière’s academic periodizations of classical literature from the seventeenth century through to the nineteenth. Second, it is also a trans-historical theory of classicism that owes more to the Symbolist movement en vogue prior to his leaving for Algiers than to the neo-classicist movements of the École Romane and Naturisme. Raoul Rosières’ review of La Fin du classicisme notes the tension between Bertrand the a posteriori literary historian, and Bertrand the a priori theorist of classical literature. However, he nonetheless judges the book to be “one of the best in a long time that has been written on literary history,” in spite of how his historical periodization sometimes undercuts his own theories.17

Bertrand’s opening set piece in his dissertation, centered on the image of the palace of Versailles, shows itself to be in some ways close to Brunetière’s method of periodizing literary criticism, and it is the same image that would resurface as an organizing image in his 1903 essay on a Latin Renaissance classique that introduced his friend Joachim Gasquet’s Les Chants séculaires, and his provençal poetry. Bertrand begins his dissertation with a set piece in which he takes the reader on an imaginary tour of Versailles—a fitting image of Ancien Régime classicism. He details each architectural fixture, including Rococo pieces,

17 Raoul Rosières in Revue Critique d’histoire et de littérature no. 53, 31 December, 1898, p. 135.
which he connects to a specific period of cultural development, and demonstrates how each exists simultaneously before the contemporary viewer, composing the entire edifice, and thus ordering the viewer’s sensibility in a synthesis of all French styles, and all French history, in a single glorious structure. But each period of French classicism connects to the whole, like a great edifice composed of different styles. Different eras’ particular expressions of classicism compose this edifice glorifying this most perfect (and absolutist) French lieu de mémoire through appropriations of antiquity, and remain as the classical pastiche that is contemporary French culture—a culture that includes both more stoic classicism along with Rococo sensibilities. Instead of an exclusivist classicism for which Maurras argued, Bertrand’s was to include all modern French history. Bertrand’s history of ideas clearly shows the influence of Brunetière, conservative classicist and his professor in Paris; but the latter’s influence is at the same time contested.

Brunetière’s model of intellectual history was an evolutionary one, though inspired more by Hegel than Social Darwinians. Cultural evolution did not mean the annihilation of a previous cultural period. Brunetière argued that preceding cultural eras, such as France’s classical period of the seventeenth century, continued to exist as strata that were, in the aggregate, the composition of contemporary society itself. The genius of each previous stage is retained, and

18 Interestingly, Freud, another classicist famous for other reasons, would use a similar conceit when describing by metaphor the human psyche in Civilization and its Discontents; he takes the reader on an imaginary tour of Rome in which each period exists simultaneously, like the various strata of the human mind.
sublimated to the whole. Bertrand’s image of Versailles is as effective an illustration of Brunetière’s evolutionary sense of French classicism (and nationalism) as anything Brunetière offered.

For Bertrand, the study of classicism was not the study of Greeks and Romans alone, nor of the *Age Classique* of seventeenth century French literature. Instead, the study of classicism was the unfolding history of the French people, in their quest to recover the Latin roots of the French race. For Bertrand, its history was intimately tied to the expansion of the French state and its elaboration of French identity, notably exemplified by the reign of Louis XIV. Bertrand would later express this model of an aesthetic and political propagation of Frenchness in his essay *La Renaissance classique* in which he argued that state, nation, race and individual were all elements of the composition that was the French Greco-Latin heritage: the state wills the nation; the nation expresses itself as an ideal according to characteristics that are racialized as French; the individual is composed of the elementary particles of its race, flowing through its blood and spirit; and finally, the artist revivifies these elements of the French race as Idea, supplementing a state that has degenerated under the Third Republic by propagating through art the racial truths of Frenchness and Latinité. Thus, classicism was a means of supplementing a degenerated French state; the artist or
poet would legislate through their art the regeneration of the nation and the individual.\textsuperscript{19}

Bertrand’s classical sources were not confined to the interior of the university alone. He also turned to avant-garde formulations of classicism, located generally in the Parisian cafés just outside. Although Bertrand admired Brunetièr’s reputation, he like many contemporaries felt that Brunetièr was too rigid and already old-fashioned: “the criteria that he introduced in criticism were of a singular narrowness. This became a scholastic hollow from which escaped all the soul and life of a book.”\textsuperscript{20} Bertrand scorned how Brunetièr deduced an artist’s importance based upon how they embodied the style of a particular period, rather than upon how their genius transcended these periods. And it is this narrowness of classical study, this sterility of analysis, which Bertrand’s work critiques even as it also targets the exoticism and unmeasured classicism of the Parnassians, and then ends with an idealist rebuttal of the Naturalists. Like many theories of classicism that were evolving at this time, most notably Maurras’s, Bertrand’s was constructed through opposition and critique of other contemporary aesthetic movements. Although much of the thesis rehearsed the history of eighteenth-century classicism, he wrote to Gasquet that his thesis expressed “towards the end some of the ideas that are dear to us, notably that Symbolism is nothing but a return to the intoxication with life of the

\textsuperscript{19} Ironically, this belief of the artist as legislator has come to be equated with Romanticism alone. See “La Renaissance classique,” passim.
\textsuperscript{20} Bertrand, Hypollite porte-couronne, p. 207.
Renaissance.” 21 He further confided, that “I am targeting the Parnassians through Delille and André Chénier.” 22 This is certainly clear in the dissertation. When he attacks Théophile Gautier for his preciousness, he contrasts it to “our symbolists, for whom poetry is something completely different,” 23 His great heroes of this period, evident from his correspondence, read like a liturgy to the icons of French Symbolism: Schopenhauer, Goethe, Victor Hugo, and in particular, Gustave Flaubert’s Salammbô and Maurice Barrès’ Le Culte du Moi trilogy. In fact, within a few days of his arrival in Algiers, entranced by the Casbah, he wrote to Gasquet that he had decided to reread Barrès’ L’Homme Libre from his balcony in the cité européenne, overlooking the Mediterranean sea—fittingly a room with a view towards France. He acknowledged in letters to Barrès that his work owed much to his predecessor’s example, although it emphasized important differences: racial hybridity, along with new frontiers, and new roots, rather than old ones. However, Bertrand mocked Barrès’ nationalism as too backwards-looking to dead tradition, rather than seeking to reawaken new energies among the French people.

In the conclusion to La Fin du classicisme, he makes clear that the future of French classicism lies not in a stale, rote imitation of past conventions, but should instead renew the confident, forward-looking precedent of the Renaissance by seeking out and synthesizing new ideas. Despite his utilization of Versailles as a

22 Ibid.
23 Bertrand, La Fin du classicisme, p. 217.
metonymy of French classicism and the French nation, he argued classicism
should not worship the cultural sites of French national memory, but create them
anew (a noteworthy position considering his advocacy for archaeological digs in
North Africa in order to recover its Latin past). After all, this was for Bertrand the
classical heritage that had been lost:

Thus romanticism was above all a renewal of the language and the
prosody that was accomplished under the influence of the archaic
classicism of the sixteenth century. One would be surprised by this
only if one was ignorant about the importance of questions of form in
art. And in our days, do we not see that the Symbolists, traversing
once again along the same roads that the Romantics had, and in the
midst of the same disparagements and the same unintelligent malice,
attempt a new instrument, without yet knowing what new song they
bring forth?24

Symbolists are rarely identified as neo-classicists, but this early work of neo-
classicism identified as both. Bertrand’s description of the aesthetic work of
Symbolist poets bears more than a few similarities to the colonizing work of
settlers in Algeria, who become, without realizing it, the instruments of a new
France and a renewal of Latin culture in Bertrand’s own writing.

Bertrand, who is commonly identified as a Naturalist due to the realist
conventions present in his early novels, and a Naturiste because of his friendship
and collaborations with Gasquet, did not praise Symbolists as a whole.25 In fact,
when he did criticize Symbolists it is for remaining indebted to their Naturalist

24 Bertrand, La fin du classicisme, p. 407-408.
25 On presenting Bertrand as a Naturalist, see for example Peter Dunwoodie, Writing French
Algeria, p. 133; Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer makes the more nuanced case in Cézanne and
Provence, where she argues that the Naturistes, with whom she includes Bertrand, amalgamated
idealism and naturalism. Cézanne and Provence, p. 218.
predecessors. *En Route* by Huysmans contained “interesting and indeed true ideas,” in its presentation of a “living reality in which all experience and erudition is contained and organized.” However, he faulted Huysmans because he thought he was “the last avatar of naturalism,” and “remains a disciple of Zola.”

Part of the problem was that Symbolism was a primarily poetic, rather than prosaic, movement. Aside from the intensely psychological and self-referential novels like those of Huysmans or the early novels of Barrès (who was featured prominently in Nordau’s critique of degenerate and decadent writing) there were few ways the avant-garde could write a social novel that did not in some way draw upon Naturalist precedent. This is one of the main reasons that the Idealist Bertrand has been pigeonholed in Naturalist movements in spite of his antipathy for Zola’s writing and Naturalism generally. Though the 1890s Symbolist works of Paul Adam are seldom mistaken to be Naturalist works, Bertrand thought even they remained tainted by this approach. He loved the Symbolist (and even for this generation of writers the highly classist, racist and anti-Semitic) *Mystère des foules* of Paul Adam, though it was “a shame that it was rushed and that in the descriptions there is still too much of the old photographic practice of Zola, and the same garbage with his notations.”

And in attacking the Parnassians and Naturalists, there was not only identification with the Symbolists, but also an implicit attack on Maurras. Always

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the exclusive guarantor of French culture in his own mind, Maurras dismissed Brunetière’s entire system of classical analysis in part for having praised the Parnassians. But Bertrand was also scathing in his attacks on narrow and exclusivist models of classicism, or what in this work he termed the “puerility of a return to imitation of antiquity,” as was central to the École Romane. Although he opposed merely uncritically mimicking foreign barbarous influences, he emphasized that the Latin race’s particular classicist affinity for linking art and Idea should not be understood “under a tyranny of canonical form.” Maurras’ classicism exasperated Bertrand, at least until the early years of the twentieth century when he made some peace with it, at least in order to advance his own literary opportunities. As late as 1900 he complained to Gasquet about how Maurras’ classicism was “replastering old-fashioned ideas in a narrow and jealous spirit.”

Bertrand was uncomfortable and angry with the backwards-facing direction that French neo-classicism was taking, and concerned with his one-time student Gasquet’s close relationship to the Naturistes. He told Gasquet that he hated (Naturisme co-founder) Saint-Georges de Bouhélier “with all my being.” He thought that his lyrical celebration of the “mediocre nature” of prairies and birds was contemptible, as was de Bouhélier’s fixation on the “virtuous worker.”

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28 There is a long tradition of classicists (and historians) targeting contemporary enemies through their representations of analogous debates in the past — and Bertrand’s discussion about the ‘end of classicism’ was consciously aimed towards more recent opponents of the classical revival.


Bertrand saw this valorization of the French worker as a throwback to the romanticization of the 1848 revolutionary who was simultaneously being resurrected by revolutionary socialists. Bertrand nonetheless argues in *La Fin du classicisme* that heroes in a barbarous age were those who engaged in manual labour. This would be manifest in the occupation of his first novel’s protagonist, and is not far off of the Naturiste position on valorizing workers. But for Bertrand, much more explicitly than with the Naturistes, it is not a French peasant or worker tied to the past, but a Latin bringing forth a bold new future for the race. In each case, with the Naturistes or with Bertrand, the valorization of the worker was of their ‘authenticity’ as true Latins filled with blood, sweat, and determination, and against their self-organization as workers.

His hatred of Naturisme, a movement whose early manifestos were published the same year as this thesis, also suggests an anxiety about his own work being marginalized as it was just coming out. His was a neo-classical revival, a Symbolist-inflected one, that was already passé in the metropole, and published while he was still among the provincial community of settler elites; it was not part of a French movement or school. By 1903, after a few years back in Provence, he seems to have made some peace with these competing movements.

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32 There were other affinities as well, such as the focus on myth-making and pagan antiquity: “The poets of life, the ‘naturists,’ whom literature textbooks present as the gravediggers of symbolism, benefited nevertheless from a current that was not interrupted during the second half of the nineteenth century, namely, comparative mythology, with an original attempt to return to the elemental meaning of myths.” Vves Bonnefoy and Wendy Doniger, *Roman and European Mythologies*, p. 273.
He was publishing alongside them in journals such as *Pays de France* and *La Renaissance Latine*. His “La Renaissance classique,” published that year in *La Renaissance Latine*, although strikingly similar to his thesis, excised the explicit praise for Symbolists and the strongly-implied attacks on the Romanes that were in his dissertation—the change in tone may have also been due to the fact that it was dedicated to his friend Gasquet (who was a member of the Naturistes before then becoming an Action Française activist along with his spouse the novelist Marie Gasquet). Perhaps most relevant of all to his changing attitude was his prophetic impression or resignation shared with Gasquet, that Maurras’ classicism would come to dominate France and French letters in the end anyway.\(^{33}\)

\(^{33}\) Bertrand’s “La Renaissance classique,” published in 1903, though it remained in most parts nearly identical to his dissertation, was highly praised by both Maurras as well as Naturisme-partisan Paul Cézanne. Cézanne himself was, as Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer shows, profoundly marked by the naturistes, particularly in what she calls his “anti-bourgeois radicalism.” Cézanne, in a letter to Gasquet, saw Naturisme as the “artistic movement Louis Bertrand has described so well in his fine preface to *Les Chants séculaires*....” Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne and Provence: The Painter in his Culture*, p. 221. “La Renaissance classique” was published again in 1903 as the preface to Gasquet’s *Les Chants Séculaires*. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, who mis-identifies Bertrand as Marseilles-born, quotes from his essay as a manifesto of the naturiste movement. This probably has more to do with the fact that it was an essay in praise of his friend who was a naturiste rather than in praise of Naturisme itself. And this reading is not entirely off base as Gasquet and Bertrand, as well as others, were drawn increasingly to Maurrasian neo-traditionalism in the early years of the twentieth century, and divisions between aesthetic movements only a few years earlier had passed into memory, as new opportunities for publishing in collaborative journals, or changing aesthetic and political affinities, led to rapprochements—or in this sense, different neo-classicists might read into it affinities they had not just a few years earlier. Bertrand had perspicaciously prophesied to Gasquet that Maurras’ classicism would come to dominate France and French letters. Bertrand’s change in tone, if not substance, may have had an element of tactical sycophancy in regards to Maurras. Maurras, who was critical of the naturistes just as they had rejected the École Romane, and hated Bertrand’s dissertational *La Fin du classicisme*, now thought that this later essay on neo-classicist aesthetics by Bertrand was one of the most important signs of a neo-classical renaissance in France. Although “La Renaissance classique” is not markedly different from his positions in *La Fin du classicisme*, it
But just as the Romanes were more a revision from within Symbolism than its opposite, Bertrand’s repudiation of these neo-classicists betrayed anxieties about intellectuals back in France quickly outpacing his neo-traditionalist theories with their own, in journals he was initially struggling to find an entry into. His repudiation of Maurras and de Bouhélier can be read as evidence of a hostility to their views, or anxiety that their views were eclipsing his own, which despite different aesthetic approaches, had much in common within their shared neo-traditionalist framework. Bertrand, like other Archicubes now teaching in a community relatively isolated from Parisian avant-garde circles, was seeking to remain at the cutting edge of the avant-garde. He schemed with Gasquet to organize a regionalist journal that would include contributions from their colleagues and friends: along with Gasquet, other contributors were to include fellow settler intellectual Stéphane Gsell, who would write on archaeology; Georges Dumesnil (Gasquet’s Idealist philosophy professor at Aix) would handle philosophy, Émile Baumann (their mutual friend and his former colleague at the

includes a more explicit connection between classical aesthetics and settler colonialism with his discussion of settlers in Algeria embodying the values of this neo-classical revival. As Bertrand emphasized in this essay, echoing the conclusion of his dissertation: “the health of the race is the first and necessary condition of all classical art.” Neo-classicism and colonialism both were answers to fears of internal class-based radicalism, and threats from external nations. For Bertrand, it is the colonies that were showing the great regenerating resistance to international communism from Transvaal to China—and it is in his settlers in Algeria that he sees this most realized. The controversies between avant-garde groups of the late 1890s were superseded by coming agreement regarding a neo-classical and nationalist renaissance in France, and are in many ways a testimony to Maurras’ incredible success in isolating opponents or drowning them in vituperation, fostering ties with a number of different intellectual movements, and all the while retaining his intense xenophobia. “La Renaissance classique,” pp. 34, 35.
Lycée d’Alger) would cover music, and the watercolorist and Occitan poet Valère Bernard art. Bertrand wanted to avoid anyone already established in any other journals. He admitted however he had not really thought out the logistics or finances. The project seems to have been put aside quickly, as Bertrand would continue to urge Gasquet to publish him in Gasquet’s Les Mois dorées. And weeks later, and several letters later, he was still asking Gasquet for a reply that had never, perhaps tactfully, come. One gets the sense of Bertrand’s desperation in the closing years of the century to help usher in a new movement publicized and united through a journal while engaged in these controversies between neo-classical schools. He was also, relatedly, desperate to achieve financial independence as a writer, but in a French department without its own avant-garde movement or self-sustaining regionalist literature. The elite circles he traveled in there were instead scholars and administrators who gravitated to famed biologist Émile Maupas’ weekly discussions and lectures at the Bibliothèque d’Alger. But his fortunes turned with the publication of his thesis and Le Sang des races. Bertrand would by the turn of the century manage to contribute to and work with other regionalist and neo-traditionalist organizations and journals with his return to Paris and Montpellier.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{Savage Classicism}

\textsuperscript{34} Bertrand, \textit{Terre de résurrection}, pp. 56-7.
Bertrand’s first novel, *Le Sang des races*, explores colonialism as an issue of racial and cultural regeneration for Latin peoples. But his dissertation explores classicism also as an issue of racial and cultural regeneration for Latin peoples. These works were written at the same time while he was in Algeria, though research was conducted in France, Spain, and Italy. In order to understand Bertrand’s colonialism, we must examine his classicism—and try to understand its relationship to the worldviews of this generation of French elites. His classical aesthetic program was not an incidental aside, but rather a central feature of his political views. There are several aspects of his dissertation on classicism that need to be examined in order to understand the connections he makes between classicism and colonialism, and to understand the aesthetic strategies he utilizes in fashioning a colonial fantasy that would become a central settler myth in Algeria. His novel puts into practice the theories he advances in his thesis. To relate both is to understand the aesthetic-political strategies of this most influential founding myth of settler society in Algeria, and how it was in fact constructed within debates about avant-garde aesthetics.

For Bertrand French classicism was French identity—it was that which shaped the French race itself. But French classicism was also a problem as might be guessed from the ambiguous title of his dissertation: “The End of Classicism and the Return to the Antique.” Bertrand defined the term classicism differently than Maurras did. ‘Classicism’ was not a solution for France’s troubles, but in fact
a symptom of it. For Bertrand, the French character was defined in its essence by classicism. But classicism is by definition imitation, and so must always seek outside itself or it becomes sterile in endless loops of repetition. *La Fin du classicisme* examined French classicism in terms of its evolution over the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but it also looked at it as a cyclical, structural problem for French culture. Classicism was the study of French civilization, but classicism as French civilization also manifested itself as a recurring crisis corresponding to the classical model of decadence. This crisis, Bertrand argued, was due to the way in which classicism, as a trans-historical practice, was condemned to cultural sterility and empty copying of past forms divorced from present circumstances. Bertrand takes for granted the argument that a period of creative energy in a civilization was supplemented by periods of cultural decadence, and of the slavish copying of past forms. Building upon arguments which can be traced back to Winckelmann, or manifest in a number of nineteenth-century classicists in France and Germany, he argued that classicism in fact always originates in empty copying of earlier creative cultural moments. When, in *La Fin du classicisme*, he praises contemporary Symbolists as they “attempt a new instrument, without yet knowing what new song they bring forth,” he could have been discussing his dissertation itself, and indeed may have been. Bertrand outlines the shape of this new instrument, a thesis on the

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history of classicism which was also a manifesto for a neo-classicism, whose aesthetics his novel then put into practice.

The lessons of his study were that for the good of the French race in this period of decadence, a Latin rebirth was necessary that would build upon the creative and “savage” classicism of the sixteenth-century Renaissance. It would not formally imitate this earlier Renaissance, but be inspired by its energetic striving beyond formal boundaries. To move beyond the boundaries of stale imitation meant that the artist should reflect contemporary concerns: first, the artist should integrate modern knowledge of the natural world instead of antique ideas; second the artist should revivify French aesthetics in colonial confrontation with foreign barbarism.

This modern re-renaissance that he called for would escape the double bind of French classicism—trapped between the servile imitation of ancient precedent, or dissolution in the face of foreign literatures—by creating a new lyricism that revealed the hidden Ideals that ordered civilization, and revealed their truths to men. This new Idealist lyricism would escape from classicizing convention by drawing upon two sources: first, by attempting through its art to synthesize the summation of human sciences and knowledge today, and second, by reinvigorating itself in proximity to examples of foreign barbarism—in order to become a more savage classicism. He most often employed the term ‘lyricism’ to mean, as the eighth Dictionnaire of the Académie Française would later define
it when he was a member of its committee, “a genre of poetry that had retained, in memory of its primitive source, a character that is especially marked by an abundance of images, the fluidity of style and the variety of rhyme.”

Classicism was born of sterile imitation, and died by returning to this sterility of endless imitation: “Its principle is imitation, and its first works are translations, compilations and pastiches.” Thus, a period of Romantic innovation must precede a period of imitative classicism. This Romantic period would in turn become the model for what would in retrospect be seen as classicism. This was a tension that was apparent enough to many Romantics like Sainte-Beuve, and evident in earlier classicist works like Émile Deschanel’s *Le Romantisme des classiques*. According to Bertrand, “to imitate form leads to the imitation of the core, and lo and behold the artist is condemned to trace to infinity.” Innovations will soon enough become routine, and subjects of French classical virility will be replaced with feminine and domestic subjects, even in the case of David: “the imitation of antiquity, encouraged by David’s school, will soon extend to women’s clothing and to the last details of furniture.”

Bertrand condemns some of the most notable French *classiques* for not being able to step outside this formulaic mimicry, including the icon of the Romantics as well as of neo-classicists like Maurras: André Chénier. Chénier was

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36 “Lyrique,” *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française, Huitième édition* (Hachette, 1932-5)
37 Bertrand, *La Fin du classicisme*, p. xi.
for Sainte-Beuve the first Romantic; for Anatole France, and the Romanes after him, the last classicist of the eighteenth century. For Bertrand he is uneasily both, but still stuck in this loop of classical repetition, leading to cultural death: “what is most striking with them all [Chénier, Ronsard, Delille, Lebrun] is an almost total sterility and a complete absence of invention. With them, the illness by which classicism will die has arrived, with this acute period: it is nothing but the return to the fundamental principle of classicism at its origins, which is imitation through exteriority – the pastiche or the paraphrase.”

He chastises these classiques for not looking to imitate the creativity, rather than the form, of these great examples of the past, who sought to draw upon the science and totality of knowledge of the time, and to synthesize it in a lyrical affectivity for an audience that classical art was to regenerate: “Instead of trying, like Dante or Lucretius to fashion a vast poetic synthesis of the universe based on the knowledge of their time, they lose themselves in the details of analysis.”

This “poetic synthesis of the universe based on the knowledge of their time” is one that Bertrand attempted in his first novel, Le Sang des races, a poetic synthesis of biological, archaeological and demographic knowledge in the colony, in other words administrative colonial knowledge reconstructed in avant-garde lyrical form as a narrative by which to delineate and summon a new settler people. This is in fact

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39 Bertrand, La Fin du classicisme, p. 220.
40 Bertrand, La Fin du classicisme, p. 220.
the secret origin of settler identity as it was disseminated by subsequent settler aesthetic movements like the Algérianistes.

The other route out of the endless cycle of classical mimicry, in order to get to the root of classical creativity, was to look to foreign literatures and settings. He argued for the need to adapt foreign innovations to French style, thus revivifying French literature without also losing its inherent order and harmony. A re-energization of French culture was clearly necessary to Bertrand, as it was for his generation of French intellectuals. In his Symbolist-inflected conclusion, he argues that, “the spirit of the ancient Greco-Roman world is still within us…” And he argues, that until Gobineau’s or Tarde’s nightmare is realized of “a complete fusion of peoples, certain hereditary tendencies will certainly persist in the principal ethnic groups. First, among the Latin races, and especially with us, it is the idea of Culture as Ideal and the harmonious and complete realization of what Humanity is, and what was the most energizing factor of the Renaissance and the dream of the Encyclopedist generation.” What was truly French was an inherent, if dormant, vitality and energy that was being reawakened in the works of Symbolist artists. The vitalism that best expressed Latin genius oscillated in between the stale imitation that was a problem with the very nature of classicism itself (exemplified by the Romanes) and over-exuberant romanticism
(exemplified by the Parnassians) that drew upon foreign barbarous literatures without maintaining any sense of French tradition, order or harmony.41

Bertrand’s solution to the sterility of classicism is for a barbarous regeneration, but within the confines of French order and tradition. His is an outward-looking classicism that will assimilate foreign inspiration within a Latin framework and language. His neo-classicism is produced in contact with foreign barbarism, resulting in, as he put it, a more savage, primal, and originary classicism. This savage and regenerative classicism thus transcends the quaintness and preciousness of pastiche. Filled with living vitality, the barbarian is a source for this regeneration, acting as an opposite for Latins to both imitate in intensity. Yet the Latin must always retain their own inherent sense of order. In retaining their true spirit, they successfully oppose the threat of this barbarism in the form of foreign literature increasingly dominating a bourgeois reading public in France. Bertrand argued that the genius of eighteenth-century classicism lay in its recognition that barbarism was crucial to classicism, an image of classicism not unlike the symbol of the half-beast centaur Chiron, teacher of Alexander. Voltaire “understood very well that in a century that was still barbarous, it was physical force that had to excite the admiration of men.”42 He also praises Diderot for his “original” or creative reasons for loving the ancients, transforming them

41 For Bertrand, as it had been for Sainte-Beuve, classicism returns to Romanticism, and Romanticism instaurates a period of classicism. In Bertrand’s case, he highlights the movement from the classical discipline of Voltaire, to Diderot’s argument in De la poésie dramatique that suppressed passions degrade men. Cf. Bertrand, La Fin du classicisme.
42 Ibid., p. 74.
according to his needs, turning Diderot into something of a Nietzschean: “What
Diderot on the contrary loves above all is the force of the imagination, it is the
violent passions of frustrated and half-savage natures.”

The barbarian signifies what is foreign to French classicism. But the term
barbarian is valenced positively as well, just as with the Symbolists; and despite
his criticisms of Voltaire for being something of a dilettante, Bertrand praises
Voltaire for recognizing that Homer was as much a barbarian as Shakespeare to
the modern French – that there is thus even something foreign about the roots of
classicism too. So all modern classicists must will tradition into being by
establishing new conventions. They must seek these conventions outside French
literature at a time when French littérateurs felt threatened by an increasingly
international market.

Images of savages and savagery, barbarism and colonialism, appear again
and again in this dissertation putatively about French classicism written for
academics of the École Normale Supérieure, albeit one finished while Bertrand
was in colonial Algeria. An important influence for Bertrand over the course of
his entire career, and manifest already in his dissertation, is the works of the

\[43\] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 96. When Enlightenment or humanist values are discussed in an Anglo-American
context, as by Roger Griffin, and opposed to French reaction, it is only by ignoring the ways in
which the Enlightenment and humanism signified for neo-traditionalists. Even as extreme an
example as Maurras would not reject the Enlightenment wholly, only those like Voltaire and
Rousseau who looked too far abroad for inspiration. Camus’s mentor Jean Grenier perceptively
noted in the neo-classicist \textit{Nouvelle Revue Française} that Maurras, for all his criticism of the
Encyclopedists and Rousseau, was every bit as much the rationalist and didact, not to mention
classicist and humanist. Jean Grenier, “Réflexions sur Charles Maurras,” in \textit{La Nouvelle Revue
quintessential conservative Romantic, Chateaubriand. For Bertrand, Chateaubriand’s genius is best expressed in his works on colonial encounters with ‘savages’ of the American frontier — and in reflection of their barbarism:

Chateaubriand, like Lamartine, is deep down a lyrical poet, that is to say an absolutely spontaneous and independent genius, neither classical, nor Romantic: his work lies beyond any category; he belongs to no school. This lyricism is fashioned from all the powerful and vague aspirations, of all the borrowings from the Barbarian, and he naturally found it in the form of Ossianesque poetry. *Atala* and *Les Natchez* had expressed all this: it is what is most primitive and personal in the work of Chateaubriand.\(^{44}\)

Works in confrontation with the colonial other are the most lyrical and affecting for Bertrand. He even has praise for Leconte de Lisle, despite being a Parnassian, due to his “finding the trace of primitive naturalist cults.” And with his beloved Flaubert (a recurring influence as well) obviously referring to the novel of North African conquest *Salammbô*, “we discover Punic rapacity, the mobility and perfidy of the Numidian, and above all the great blind force and the stupidity of the barbarian world.”\(^{45}\)

If Bertrand looked to colonial encounters across the Atlantic or Mediterranean as sources for classical regeneration, emulating Romantic precedent, he also looked across the Rhine. Bertrand, like Huysmans and Barrès,

\(^{44}\) Bertrand, *La Fin du classicisme*, p. 349.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 272. Flaubert’s *Salammbô* was a model for his *Le Sang des races*, much more than Zola’s naturalism. Bertrand wrote his novels, like most regionalists, in a realist manner, like his predecessor Flaubert. But Bertrand thought that critics who saw Flaubert’s work as realist had grossly misunderstood him. In fact he saw Flaubert’s *Salammbô* as the realization of Spinozan philosophy. His discussion on this matter is perfunctory and vague, and there are a number of ways Bertrand could have conceived this to be the case, but it is striking that through the 1890s he is reading, and adapting Symbolist icons by reading one through another — seeking to adapt their ideas to an investigation of classicism in France, and a call for a neo-classical renaissance.
but unlike the more exclusivist Maurras, also praised the importance of German thought and the literature of the North. The works of German intellectuals and their periodic assimilation into French literature was necessary for rejuvenating sterile Latin civilization. Every time that the Latin sensibility becomes too restrictive, “there is the need for a new invasion of the Barbarians of the North, to give him a sense of the complexity of things, to enlarge and especially to enrich his conception of life.” However, “the exaltation of foreign literatures would become in turn a danger.” French classicism risked producing an agonistic feeling of sterility and emptiness, as well as alienation in its heteronymous repetition. But if too much attention was turned outwards to slavishly imitate foreign literary barbarisms, then French identity risked further being compromised by a debilitating foreign contagion.

Bertrand’s thesis argues that it is “among the Latin races and especially among us [the French],” that the ideal of humanity, as exemplified in the Renaissance, is achieved … and “the Latin spirit will continue and without doubt oppose itself to the nature of the barbarian with its excessive concern for utility, with its cold and narrow morality, with its savage and devastating eruptions of sentiment. Art will appear as the most perfect symbol of the social bond.” For Bertrand, art must be a social art, supplementing the bonds dissolved by a decadent Republic with its empty slogans of patriotism in the face of a German

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46 Bertrand, *La Fin du classicisme*, p. 422.
supremacy that still occupied his home in Lorraine. It will oppose a barbarism
that seems to conflate stereotypes of various national literatures (English utility,
German cold morality, Slavic and/or Arab savage eruptions). And this social art
will find new modern images with which to reveal the ancient truths of a Latin
patrimony—a patrimony of struggle, supremacy, and genius revealed in this
neo-classicist Bildung. Bertrand, having only lived a few years in Provence, is
here, as a Lorraine-born intellectual, repeating Germaine de Staël’s ideas on
German-French difference, which were appropriated by the Mistralien Félibrige
as the essential difference between French Gallic northerners and Latin
southerners. Bertrand’s view of a rebarbarizing classicism also agrees with
Barrès’s (and other Symbolists’) early writings, in which the protagonists only
find themselves, and French culture, by confronting the Barbarian.

Bertrand’s later work fashioned an image of colonial Algeria in which
rebarbarized Latin colonists, creating a new Latin dominion in what had long ago
been a province of the Roman Empire, were able to escape the emptiness of
metropolitan by means of their struggles against a harsh but lyrical environment,
and a savage, barbarous enemy in the image of the Arab. It seems obvious that
his work is primarily representing a settler view of colonial Algeria. But this
narrative of the ‘realities’ of colonial Algeria is in many ways constructed in the
model of his own aesthetic program developed in this essay on French classicism.
In this essay he already reveals his recurring idea of a new race of Latins who
will escape the empty classicism of contemporary France, and oppose foreign
influence by becoming more barbarous in their classicism. The structure and
logic of these aesthetic and political programs was identical. Classicism and
colonialism fed one into the other like a chiasmus.

Bertrand found his solution to the abyss of French classicism during his
stay in Algeria among the subculture of colonial intellectuals there. On the heels
of his dissertation, this solution was in the form of a novel that would be a
remarkable classicist composition, synthesizing many strands of 1890s avant-
garde debates about the French nation and classicism occulted within colonial
fantasies of a permanent occupation of Algeria. As he published his thesis in
1897, he continued to work on his novel *Le Sang des races*, which he had thought
to title at the time *La Vie Glorieuose*, then *Gloire de la vie*. He told Gasquet that his
vision for his novel was broadened by attending lectures in biology in Algiers,
and his study of classical art for his thesis.48 *Le Sang des races* was originally
published in serial form in *La Revue de Paris* beginning in 1897, and published as
a novel in 1899.49

49 Seth Graebner’s innovative study of Bertrand’s views on architecture mistakenly dates *Le Sang
des races*’ publication date at 1895. Seth Graebner, *History Place: Nostalgia and the City in French
Algerian Literature* (Lexington Books, 2007), p. 35. But at this period its title was not even decided
upon, and was only a concept that would change over time—particularly due to his visit that
same year to Spain, in which he wrote to Baumann how the alien presence of the Spanish race
made him feel more French. This observation, easily recognizable as a tourist cliché, was in the
hands of Barrès turned into a philosophic program of identity in the modern era—the tourist
nationalist finding his own nation’s roots along the routes of bourgeois tourism, in museums, art
galleries, and directed by Baedeker to historical sites of reflection—Barrès: the ultra-nationalist as
exote.
His first novel was a neo-classicist work that realized the program advocated in his dissertation. It was hidden in plain sight of what was interpreted only by some as a colonialist or Naturalist novel: the crisis of metropolitan classicism Bertrand highlighted in his thesis was finally here resolved, in a novel that would become the foundational text of Algérianiste literature, the mythopoeisis for a settler race in formation. Having looked at the classicist context of his dissertation, it is now important to look to the demographic context of his novel, and how in this novel he weds these two strands, finding a solution to each crisis, one aesthetic, the other political, in the example of the other. In other words, the 1890s classicist crisis is resolved in his celebration of Spanish settlers; the 1890s demographic crisis about Spanish settlers is resolved through his classicist aesthetic strategies. But before we examine how Bertrand applied his classicist theses to this ‘problem’ of Spanish assimilation, it is important to survey the underappreciated demographic panics centered on Spanish settlers in fin-de-siècle Algeria, and their relation to colonial anxieties about Jews and Muslims in the colony.

**Demography and Settler Identity**

Bertrand’s first novel, *Le Sang des races*, explores the problems and possibilities of neo-classicism as a social art. If the dissertation was already
focused on classicism as an issue of race and cultural regeneration in France, Le Sang des races pushes these ideas further. In it, he fashions a neo-classical utopia in his representation of colonial Algeria. In particular, he applies the aesthetic lessons he had already explored in his dissertation to the issue of the formation of a settler race in the colony. In the figure of the Latin settler, Bertrand condenses two crises with one resolution: the crisis of imitation in neo-classical debates, and the colonial administrative crisis of settler immigrants from non-French countries, a recurring concern among administrative and scholarly elites while he was in Algeria. So to understand the specific colonial situation he applied his aesthetic principles to, requires a brief discussion of racial hierarchy and demographic panics in fin-de-siècle Algeria. Algeria focused for Bertrand the idea that the crisis of Western Civilization in general, and French culture particular, was a problem of race—and it was through a neo-classicist racial regeneration that France would be saved.

His first novel is clearly about the putative ‘problem’ of race in Algeria. In the novel, the protagonist encounters Arabs, Jews and settlers. But the racial conflict he focuses on is not that of Arabs or Berbers resisting dispossession, destitution and French dominion, or Jews struggling against race-baiting orators and settler riots at the time of the anti-Semitic ‘events’ of the late 1890s. Instead, he focuses on infra-settler difference—specifically of Spanish settlers in a French Algeria.
Colonial hierarchies as set up by propagandists like Bertrand were oversimplifications, if not outright fantasy. There was a definitive colonial reality of dispossession and expropriation, and then many perspectives about what that reality meant. For many Algerians, the settlers were invaders, **Roumi**, and unbelievers. In agrarian Algerian communities that had not been dispossessed, and depending on the region, the French were often out of sight, if less out of mind. Decision-making was more often negotiated at the local level, by different political bodies according to region and local culture. And settler society too was in itself astonishingly complex, and divided by ethnic hierarchies just as the broader colonial categories of European, Jew and Muslim were. Settler administrators, journalists and artists encouraged a colonial hierarchy of European at top, then Jew, then Muslim at bottom. There were also hierarchies and differences within these categories: indigenous Jews vs. European Jewish settlers; Amazighen vs. Arabs. And so too, settlers were stratified upwards and downwards on the Great Chain of Colonial Being—at least as constructed by settler elites. Many administrators, scholars and artists stressed the affinities between Spanish or Maltese on the one hand and Algerians on the other. The barbarism of these non-French settlers was ascertained by the fact they might yet reproduce, or their ancestors had reproduced, with Arabs. For instance, there were common fears among colonial scholars that Spanish immigrants would
rapidly take over the colony as they “even breed with Muslims.”\textsuperscript{50} Anxieties about settler populations being overwhelmed by Spanish immigration were a repeated concern.\textsuperscript{51}

*Le Sang des races* is certainly a novel that legitimates French domination over Algerians, but the action is principally and specifically concerned with infra-settler relations, and the assimilation of a Spanish family into French settler society. The ‘problem’ of race this novel focuses on is about Spanish settlers not assimilating into French dominion and maintaining their allegiances to the Iberian Peninsula. Bertrand resolves this problem, what was a real crisis for colonial administrators in the 1880s and 90s, by turning this demographic crisis into a classical solution to French decadence: the more brutal and masculine races of Spanish and other Latin settlers will be an example for effete and decadent French people to follow in the colony and metropole, in order to reawaken their now decadent Latin heritage.

Although there are excellent studies of Algerians in the colonial era, and Algerian Jews specifically as well, settlers have, with a few exceptions, tended to be treated too often as a bloc, instead of discrete groups within what for most

\textsuperscript{50} Bertrand later argued that Spanish people would have remained Muslim but for the directing spirit of the Northerner—not far from the colonial relationship of French administrator and Spanish settler. In *Le Sang des races*, he notes that other settlers “despised [the Maltese] because of their mixed blood and their resemblance to the Moors and the Jews.” Bertrand, *Le Sang des races*, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{51} René Ricoux *La démographie figurée de l’Algérie. Étude statistique des populations européennes qui habitent l’Algérie avec douze tableaux graphiques* (1880); Victor Demontès, (Office du Gouvernement Général de l’Algérie, 1922); Jean Garry, *Les Espagnols d’Oranie: le problème démographique, le problème colonial, le problème politique* Centre des archives d’outre-mer (CAOM) 10 H 89 (14).
people in Algeria was seen an occupying force, for the privileged few, a home.\footnote{Notable exceptions include Andrea L. Smith, \textit{Colonial Memory and postcolonial Europe: Maltese settlers in Algeria and France} (Indiana University Press, 2006); Gérard Crespo, \textit{Les Italiens en Algérie, 1830-1960: histoire et sociologie d'une migration} (J. Gandini, 1994); Miguel Martinez López, \textit{Casbah d'oubli: l'exil des réfugiés politiques espagnols en Algérie (1939-1962)} (L'Harmattan, 2004); See also the chapter on Spanish settlers in Jonathan K. Gosnell, \textit{The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria} (University of Rochester Press, 2002).}

An explosion of settler publications littered the colonists’ public sphere in the last years of the nineteenth century in Algiers, Oran, Bône and Constantine. In them, settler writers began to refer to an ‘Algerian’ settler race in formation in the colony, composed of ‘miscegenating’ immigrants from the Mediterranean littoral, principally Spain, Italy and Malta, and either including or excluding French settlers from the metropole. The French called these other settlers ‘neo-French’, often as a term of contempt. At the time that Bertrand was writing his dissertation and first novel, anti-Semitism in Algeria — what Charles-Robert Ageron called the baseline of settler society — was reaching one of its many boiling points. Many of the settler journals founded in the 1890s had as their editorial line an explicitly anti-Semitic program, heightening to a fever pitch during the Dreyfus Affair.\footnote{See Gosnell, \textit{The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria}. Titles included Anticlérical Juif (1898), Anti-Juif (1890), Antijuif (1912), Antijuif Algérien (1897-1907), Anti-Juif Intransigeant (1903-1907), Colon Anti-Juif Algérien (1898), Combat Anti-Juif (1895), Combat Socialiste Anti-Juif (1895), Intransigeant Algérien Anti-Juif (1904), Jeune France Anti-Juive (1900), Lutte Anti-Juive (1898), Nouvel Anti-Juive Algérien (1898), Paria Juif (1898), Petit Antijuif Algérien (1902), Révolte Anti-Juif (1898), Révolte Anti-Juif (1900), La Révolte Anti-Juive (1899), Trique Antijuive (1898-1901), Union Anti-Juive (1904)... and these are titles from the Algiers press alone. For this list, I rely on Ali Mérad’s survey of Algerian and settler publications in ”La Formation de la presse musulmane en Algérie, 1919-1939,” in \textit{IBLA}, volume 27, 1964, p. 28. On the Algerian press generally, see Gosnell, \textit{The Politics of Frenchness}; Zahir Ihaddadden, \textit{Histoire de la presse indigène en Algérie: les origines jusqu'en 1930} (ENAL, 1983).} Cagayous l’anti-juif was one of the titles of Auguste Robinet’s serialized stories of a trickster-like, patois-speaking settler. Anti-semitic
violence was championed by, among others, Édouard Drumont, author of *La France Juive*, who was elected the Algiers deputy to the French parliament, and Max Régis, mayor of Algiers, at the time Bertrand was composing his earliest novels. If the Dreyfus Affair was sparked by events in the metropole, Algiers, Oran, and Algeria generally played an important role in the unfolding of these events as any other city or region or France. In Algeria, the 1898 riots—in which settlers rampaged through Jewish neighbourhoods attacking people and property—turned deadly. Settlers targeted Algerian Jews who had been granted French citizenship; but to most settlers, they remained, as in the words of Admiral Gueydon, “Arabs of Israelite confession,” too Oriental and Arab to be properly French. In fact the image of the ‘Orientalized Jew’ was current among Anti-Dreyfusards in the metropole as well as propagated by Drumont. It would only be with the increasing settler anxieties of anti-colonial nationalism after World War II that Algerian Jews, who had briefly lost their citizen status under Vichy, came to be identified by some settlers as also being ‘Pied Noirs’. For Gabriel Hanotaux, a key politician under Jules Ferry’s administration, the problem was that Algerian Jews had “profited” from their emancipation in 1870 by “meddling” in politics, thus irritating feelings against them. But according to

54 On the subject of the orientalization, and ‘de-orientalization’ of Jews in history, see Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek Jonathan Penslar, *Orientalism and the Jews* (Brandeis, 2004).
55 Guy Pervillé, “Comment appeler les habitants de l’Algérie avant la définition légale d’une nationalité algérienne?” in *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 54 (1997), pp. 55-60; see also Todd Shepard’s *The Invention of Decolonization*, in which he examines the OAS’s currying of Algerian Jewish support.
Hanotaux, this violence would be a thing of the past, as Algerian Jews were “too clever not to moderate themselves...” According to the passive-aggressive logic of colonial racism, Jews were typically blamed for inviting violence upon themselves. But most French observers also blamed the non-French settlers for the violence. Historian Augustin Bernard saw the riots as the result of competition between Spanish and Jewish settlers, set off by the former, and their perception that Jews controlled commerce. Or again, to the novelists the Tharaud brothers, it was due to Italian immigrants.

If the violence itself was displaced upon Jews or non-French settlers, many colonial scholars nonetheless found something to celebrate in these events. They argued that this explosion of anti-Semitic violence was the moment of genesis for settlers—French, Spanish, Italian, Maltese, and others—coming to see themselves distinctly as a new people collectively. This was a conclusion that contradicted

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56 Hanotaux, L’Energie française, p. 307.

The anti-Semitic riots were in part responsible for the decentralization of authority to the Délégations Financières, which were more broadly the result of increasing pressures on monoculture economies in the face of downturns. This crisis of decentralization would return in the inter-war period. It would be met with an increased wave of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim violence. This racialized violence was embedded in the very conditions of colonialism in Algeria. It reinforced conflict between different groups along legal, political, and socio-economic lines. It insured that this violence would be written into its very fabric. According to EF Gautier, “The Délégations Financières were not the result of the mature consideration of the central government but of Algeria’s violence... [The anti-Semitic riots] were occasioned by an economic condition—a crisis in the wine industry, which was manifested at the same time in the home provinces where the vine is more or less a monoculture as in Algeria—in Montpellier, the viticultural capital of the Midi, in Aube, in the vine country of Champagne for instance. Though an ordinary economic disturbance, it had considerable and immediate political consequences. A strong government, such as that of the Second Empire would have squelched it immediately. The
claims that this was the act of one ethnic group alone. But this view that an orgy of violence was the founding moment for a settler race was the opinion of Louis Bertrand as well as the later Secretary General of the Association des Écrivains Algériens, Jean Pomier. They situated these riots as the original inspiration of their "social art" to realistically represent a settler race in formation, with its own regional or national distinctions from metropolitan French people. For Pomier, as well as Bertrand, the anti-Semitic riots were the catalyst for an Algerian literature, one that would shape a people. According to Pomier, the riots possessed an "unfortunate ‘Donatist’ appearance", in other words, the riots were populist. This populist violence, and its relation to a new settler identity, was the subject "enlightened men" analyzing it as a phenomenon. To Pomier, here was an "embryonic psychological study of crowds and the indigenous." which was itself the birth of a settler literary movement—the study of crowds and races, crowds and races to be anxiously shaped and directed. Bertrand, who identified as a Dreyfusard, was opposed to the so-called ‘populist’ or left-wing anti-Semitism, but he nonetheless wrote to Gasquet as well as Barrès about the
government of the Third Republic yielded and created the Délégations Financières.” EF Gautier, “French Colonial Policy in Theory and Practice: A Review,” in Geographical Review, vol 21, no. 1 (Jan. 1931), p. 132. For Gautier, it was the lack of strength of the Third Republic government that, if not the cause of this violence, was its enabler “...the Third Republic, unlike the Second Empire, has never been a strong power. It is the very feebleness of the central authority that has given the opportunity for individual initiative.” Gautier, “French colonial policy,” p. 131.
59 CAOM 75 APOM 45, Jean Pomier mss. pp. 617-8; realist and naturalist literature would exert a profound influence on writings about crowds. There are striking affinities between demographic science and realist novels, with each informing the other. The influence of realist literature on American sociology is an example. Robert Park of the Chicago School was explicit in seeking to create a science that would correspond to the naturalist novel. See Franco Moretti, Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms (Verso, 2005), p. 110.
laudatory effects the riots had upon the sense of settler community and identity.\footnote{Bertrand’s \textit{parti pris} in the Dreyfus Affair does not diminish the orientalization of Jews as exotic and foreign in his writings—as and his increasingly explicit anti-Semitism in the service of political alliances—especially with his pro-Nazi positions later. The understandable approach to read white hats and black hats into the Dreyfus Affair sometimes risks exculpating the anti-Semitism of Dreyfusards, of which there was a considerable variety and intensity, and in turn transform anti-Dreyfusards into cartoons. See Venita Datta, \textit{Birth of a National Icon}. Bertrand was a Dreyfusard and later pro-Nazi. Gide was an anti-Dreyfusard and later anti-Nazi. Bertrand would critique fellow neo-traditionalists like Lyautey for what Bertrand saw as his boorish anti-Semitism, and the political anti-Semitism of Barrès and Maurras as opportunistic and cynical. In fact, Bertrand’s anti-Semitism was too rarefied to associate with the ‘populist’ anti-Semitism of Drumont or Régis.}

But just as Bertrand’s ideas on Latin identity had a scholarly tradition in Algeria, as well as in France, his notions of a settler race also had precedents in administrative debates about Spanish settlers.

Many recent scholars, such as Rabah Belamri, Patricia Lorcin, Peter Dunwoodie and Stephen Gosnell have discussed Algérianiste settler writing, and Bertrand’s in particular, in its racialist anxieties regarding the perceived threat posed by Muslim Algerians.\footnote{Cf. Belamri, \textit{L’Oeuvre de Louis Bertrand}; Patricia Lorcin, \textit{Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria} (I.B. Tauris, 1999); Dunwoodie, \textit{Writing French Algeria}; Gosnell, \textit{The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria}.} Arab nationalism and the \textit{Islah} reformist movements were increasingly a source of hatred and fascination for Bertrand, and a lens through which he wrote about European culture and history, especially after his journey in 1906 as a reporter to Egypt and other Mediterranean countries for the \textit{Revue des Deux Mondes}. But his earliest novels and letters do not provide such a clear reading. His hatred of Muslims was the most consistent element of his politics in every period of his life since the 1890s. If he came to fear Bolshevism more in the early twentieth century, it was an
atavistic and Orientalized one. But his fear of Muslim rebellion or invasion is often teleologically read back into his early concerns, such as by citing Bertrand’s 1920 preface in discussions of his 1899 novel *Le Sang des races*. Dunwoodie is largely correct, but overstates the case when he argues that Bertrand erases Algerians from *Le Sang des races* and other novels. Instead, the novel presents Algerians in a state of degeneration, decline, and extinction, confidently superseded by vigorous and virile settlers. It is, in short, a genocidal utopia. The near absence of Muslims in the novel is crucial—but not only because it creates a fantasy of a new unpeopled land to occupy. Rather, it leaves the action focused on infra-settler difference. After 1906, he would present Europe on the defensive against a supposedly monolithic Muslim world, and orientalized workers, Germans, Jews and radicals. But in *Le Sang des races*, rather than focus on Algerians, or settlers generally, the novel focuses on a family of Spanish settlers and how they become, over generations, transformed from being Spanish settlers looking back to the Iberian peninsula, to being the new indigenous Algerians on this energetic and regenerative frontier of civilization. The novel’s only excursion from Algeria is not to France, but to Spain and back, as the principal protagonist Rafaël searches for his roots that he only finds in the dénouement, where he happily accepts his role as a working-class settler in Africa, as part of a new, confident, forward-looking Latin race working to add value to this French colony.
In the 1880s, preceding the Anti-Jewish riots and Auguste Robinet’s *Cagayous* by over a decade, there were a number of scholarly works on the racial fusion of settlers. Fears of Algerian Muslims are apparent in these works. But the catalyst for these discussions was about the fears, not of Algerian Jews, nor of Algerian Muslims, but of non-French colonists, and Spanish in particular, acculturating to a French colonial society. It was in this context that the notion of a new colonial race of European immigrants in formation was first explored in detail. These were debates about European migration and acculturation into which Bertrand inserted his classicist thesis, in the form of a novel about settlers. If this debate on non-French settlers was where the formation of a settler race in Algeria was first discussed in a public forum, it is worth examining in greater detail why it occurred in a dizzyingly interdisciplinary scholarly discussion about political economy, climatic determinism, species adaptation, racial miscegenation and demography. Of course debates about miscegenation, and its generative, rather than debilitating, effects on civilization, could be found further back: in Gobineau’s works for instance. However, the ways in which it was

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62 On Algerian demographics, there is no work remotely comparable in scope and detail to Kamel Kateb’s *Européens, ‘indigènes’ et juifs en Algérie, 1830-1962* (PUF, 2001).

63 Tzvetan Todorov notes that for Gobineau, civilization was by definition heterogeneous: “a nation results from the fusion of formerly isolated tribes: their lands are joined, their populations merge... we find that the same ability to unify populations that were originally distinct provides the very definition of the word ‘civilization.’ When he reaches the point of identifying and characterizing the various forms of civilization, Gobineau resorts to criteria that once again emphasize intermixing...” between the social mobility of European civilization, and the stability of “Oriental civilizations.” Todorov, *On Human Diversity: National, Racism and Exoticism in French Thought* (Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 132-3. Here we find in the works of Gobineau, no
debated in Algeria had to do with settler populations, and Spanish communities in particular.64

In the 1880s, statistics on Algerian birthrates were only beginning to show an increase in numbers after decades of war, dislocation, and then famine. By mid-century some French administrators had expected or anticipated the eventual extinction, or extermination, of Algerians. In 1887, the most celebrated economist of the Third Republic, Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, addressed what seemed the more immediate concern for French hegemony, which was the fear of a ‘Spanish invasion’, especially in Oran. Spanish climatic predisposition to the African land, so it was thought, together with the great numbers of settlers originally from the Iberian Peninsula, alarmed politicians and publicists seeking to keep Algeria French. However, he compared statistical samples from 1876 and 1881 to argue that a Spanish ‘invasion’ of immigrants was becoming less a problem. There was often something of a colonial shell game going on in treatises less, identifiable concepts of mimicry and hybridity being valorized as essential for European supremacism.

64 There are even earlier incarnations of this thesis He also wrote that Flaubert’s Salammbô inspired him in its depiction of miscegenating races in North Africa. Flaubert had himself written in a letter that it was reading Émile Bertherand’s work on Arab hygiene and medicine that had inspired him with (anachronistic) details for representing Carthage in Salammbô. In Médicine and Hygiène des arabes, Bertherand wrote that “It should be noted that the Kouloughlis, products of the unions between Indigenous women and Turks, are stronger and more intelligent. Here is the important question of fusion, upon which certainly depends the implantation of the French nation in Algeria.” Émile Bertherand, Médicine et hygiène des Arabes: études sur l’exercice de la médecine et de la chirurgie chez les musulmans de l’Algérie, leurs connaissances en anatomie, histoire naturelle, pharmacie, médecine légale, etc., leurs conditions climatériques générales, leurs pratiques hygiéniques publiques et privées, leurs maladies, leurs traitements les plus usités (Baillière, 1855), p. 174; Flaubert, Correspondance, Tome 4, 1860, p. 393. It is impossible to establish with certainty if Flaubert read this particular passage in his work, but the evidence is suggestive. In any event, it speaks to the long tradition of novelists (in this case, Bertrand’s favourite) in the colony turning to colonial biology as a source for representing conflict in their fiction.
about Algerian society in order to make French dominion seem feasible to readers back home. According to Leroy-Beaulieu’s categorization, as in the later statistical tables appearing in the works of Victor Demontès, Muslim Algerians were French subjects, and thus placed alongside French citizens, in opposition to the threatening numbers of ‘foreigners’: mainly Spanish, Italian, Maltese, but also Greek, German, British and even a few Canadians. Non-French settlers were on one side, and French settlers and Algerian subjects on the other. When discussing the prospects for the necessary assimilation of Algerians, the opportunity for a lasting French colony would require at least hundreds of years of sustained effort by the metropole. But then when addressing the ‘problem’ of non-French immigrants and settlers, Algerians were shifted onto the ‘French’ side of the demographic ledger, to give added weight against anxieties about waves of foreigners swamping the French colony. This finessing of demographic statistics had a long history, and was earlier incarnated in the 1860s in light of anxieties about Arab peoples as implacable enemies to French dominion.

Admiral Warnier then classified over one million Arabic-speaking Algerians as “Berbères arabophones.” Thus Algerians were simplistically divided into two distinct, static and polarized camps, perpetuating a “Berber myth” of difference between Arabs and Berbers, rather than recognize a reality of many distinct but

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dynamic and pluralist communities linked economically, socially and culturally for centuries, such as the Icawiyen (Chaouis), the M’zabites, and other peoples.  

According to demographer Jacques Bertillon, one hundred thousand settlers would be needed to emigrate from France every year, a prodigious number given existing metropolitan anxieties about declining French birth rates in the face of German power. However, Leroy-Beaulieu argued that a tenth that number would be needed, joined with an equal number of other Europeans, to give by the end of the century a population between eight and nine hundred thousand settlers of European race, “with besides, four million and one half to five million Arabs already partially imbedded with our civilization.”

If a new unified settler people were in fact forming, they had to remain under French rule and sharing its culture. Leroy-Beaulieu’s solutions to the immigrant ‘problem’ were for linguistic, cultural and religious assimilation, which in the end, were each really variations on linguistic assimilation. He proposed a law requiring all native-born settlers be instructed in French: “It is the school above all that can exert a great influence on the assimilation of foreign

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67 Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, L’Algérie et la Tunisie, deuxième édition (Guillaume et C., 1897) pp. 36, 37. Leroy-Beaulieu speculated, based on the evidence, that “A statistician imbued with imagination and drawing from the law of numbers all its logical consequences, would conclude that, in a few centuries, Algeria will have become a new Judea; this seems to us not a result to fear, but the Jewish element will exert a profound influence on the destiny of Algeria.” Leroy-Beaulieu, L’Algérie et la Tunisie, p. 50.
elements to the French element.” But counter to secularist republicans, Leroy-Beaulieu, a devout Catholic, argued the acculturation of Spanish, Italian and Maltese settlers to French civilization would be best achieved by the recruitment of an exclusively French clergy “who using our language in sermons, homilies, confessions, have indirectly contributed to the fusion of foreign Algerians to our nationals.” Unfortunately, according to Leroy-Beaulieu, most of the sectarians, ignorants and simpletons who ruled in our Parliament from 1881 to 1886, have suppressed three quarters of the credits for the Algerian clergy, and notably, abolished all allocations for the seminaries. It was, in a way, decreeing that only Italians and Spaniards would compose the Algerian clergy. When a nation has the bad fortune to compose its Parliament with the confused and short-sighted, it transforms the means that would have assured its prosperity into instruments of ruin.

Finally, the domestic sphere was another crucial area where acculturation of non-French settlers would be brought about, echoed in later republican arguments in France about the domestic duties for assimilating immigrants through ‘mixed’ unions. Inter-marriage should be encouraged, he wrote, to help acculturate the European foreigners, but also to allow the French to acclimatize to Algeria better. This “creole generation” offered better resistance to the climate and diseases, which along with improving hygienic programs, and the

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68 Ibid., p. 55, 54.  
69 Ibid., p. 55  
70 Ibid., p. 55.  
transformation of the land, would allow French civilization to prosper.\textsuperscript{72} “If the French race loses its purity, it heightens its powers of resistance to the climate.”\textsuperscript{73} This new creole race specific to Algeria, imbued with French culture through persistent colonial governance and domestic reproductive duty for the good of the state, would through miscegenation help acclimatize the French to the Mediterranean littoral with the supposedly hardier stock of other Mediterranean Europeans on African shores. In other words, climatic acculturation would be assured through miscegenation with ‘hardier’ stock, and a generative cross-breeding of the French race would produce a great good for the colony and France’s dominion. The anticipation of a new settler people in formation in Algeria would remain a recurring theme of colonial literature, but from the works of Bertrand through to the works of Camus, this fusion would always remain an advent, just on the cusp of realization, while masking a whole hierarchy of racist divisions among the settlers themselves.

The fusion of settlers and Algerians was for Leroy-Beaulieu a process of centuries, and was not treated with the same concern for Spanish immigrants in particular. But the republican government, as well as scholars Belkassem Ben Sedira and Onésime Reclus, were making assimilationist arguments for fusion through linguistic acculturation.\textsuperscript{74} Kamel Kateb notes that the anxiety of a new

\textsuperscript{72} Leroy-Beaulieu, L’Algérie et la Tunisie, pp. 55-6
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p. 54.
\textsuperscript{74} One of the earliest Algerian intellectuals to teach at the Université d’Alger, in 1887 Belkassem Ben Sedira published Une mission en Kabylie sur les dialectes berbères et l’assimilation des indigènes,
race forming through Algerian and settlers reproducing was as clear among partisans for the (eventual) total assimilation of Algerians, as for those advocates of ‘association’.  

The same year as Le Sang des races was finished, 1898, in the midst of the crises of settler rioting including threats of separatism, Victor Demontès published a study on the demographic pressures of non-French settlers titled “Les Étrangers en Algérie.” This was a study of foreigners in Algeria under which, of course, he does not include the French. He examines what was once again seen as a serious demographic crisis of foreigners to Algeria, which Leroy-Beaulieu had thought years earlier would be imminently solved. He includes under the category ‘French’ both naturalized and French-born citizens, and, as with Leroy-Beaulieu, also Arab and Berber subjects. For Demontès, the real threat to French hegemony in Algeria, politically, socially and economically, was in the remainder: Maltese, sub-Saharan Africans, Italians, Spanish. Yet Demontès again concludes optimistically that the threat is not a lasting one: with increasing miscegenation, the pressures for the “pseudo-French” spouse to take French

which had been commissioned by the Governor-General Tirman to recover from tribes in the Djurdura and Bougie “all the elements necessary to facilitate the study of Berber dialects.” Ben Sedira’s work remains an important historical record of Amazigh culture. Belkassem Ben Sedira, Une mission en Kabylie sur les dialectes berbères et l’assimilation des indigènes (Alger: Librarire Adolphe Jourdain, 1887).


citizenship, and the laws of naturalization for non-indigenous Algerians born on its soil, French citizenship will increase, and this next generation will be drawn to the advantages of French identity over their foreign parents’. Demontès sees a solution in miscegenation between the French and the “Latin races.” In particular, the French choose Spanish women, due to their grace, pretty eyes, and build, while Spanish women choose the French, as the latter are more educated, polite, in other words, civilized, and belong to the “mistress-nation of Algeria.” The Maltese, were “metissée with Arab blood” and thus to Demontès, more resistant to the climate. The Italians, though they had taken French citizenship in the greatest numbers, had done so out of convenience, for unlike the Spanish they had “no French sentiment.” The Spanish in their prodigious numbers were the greatest threat to the stability of the colony, but also its future’s salvation. His description shifts, after providing a table on Algerian populations, to an extended description of essentialized racial character types that almost perfectly matches the racialized realist character types in the settler novels of Bertrand, Randau or Camus.

In each demographic study, the Spanish difference was presented as a threat to French hegemony that would always be just on the cusp of being solved through racial miscegenation. But fears of a Spanish demographic invasion

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78 Ibid., p. 223.
79 Ibid. p. 215.
80 Ibid., p. 220.
81 Ibid.
would return again and again in the 1930s and 1940s, when a Spanish-language journal appeared in Oran challenging assimilation, and later when a new wave of immigrants fleeing the Spanish Civil War and Franco’s regime arrived, to be met, as in France, with concentration camps.  

There was never a homogeneous Spanish settler community. Different people came from diverse parts of Spain as they did from France, in succeeding waves, like Albert Camus’ and Emmanuel Roblès’ ancestors. During the Second World War, Jean Garry wrote an unpublished study Les Espagnols d’Oranie. Le Problème démographique. Le problème colonial. Le problème politique. His sociological study was focused on people of Spanish origin in the Oranois, where Spanish settlement had historically been most concentrated—outnumbering settlers of French origin. Like earlier demographic studies he began by stressing that the influx of Spanish people was a historical problem for colonial authorities, though many increasingly see themselves as ‘neo-French’. Garry distinguishes between ‘Spanish’, meaning recent unassimilated immigrants, and ‘neo-French’ assimilated settlers of Spanish heritage. However, Garry qualifies the success of this assimilation, as even the ‘neo-French’ component of Spanish-French-Algerians still keep some of their customs, to his concern. Furthermore, he adds another division among settlers of Spanish origin in an increasingly politically polarized French and Algerian society: the assimilated ‘neo-French’ and ‘bourgeois’ immigrants were Franco

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82 Jean Garry, Les Espagnols d’Oranie, CAOM 10H89 (14); see also Gosnell, The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria.
supporters, while the poorest and newest immigrants were ‘gouvernementaux’, that is, Spanish republicans. The Spanish were seen, along with Muslims, as a constant problem for colonial governance: “In a large part of French Morocco and Algeria, the French administration is faced with daily ethnic problems regarding the Spanish colonist and the indigenous peasant.” Spaniards and Algerians are further connected, for according to Garry, the French of Spanish-descent learn Arabic much easier than French, and get on better. The most telling evidence for Garry, again highlighting the importance that domestic life had to French colonial rule, is that “the women even have no fear of marrying the indigènes.” Spanish and Maltese ‘neo-French’ were presented in colonial literature as historically closer to Arabs than were the French, occupying an in-between status, a colonial hyphen, like Mediterranean Spain and Malta, between barbarism and civilization. There never was a Latin race of settlers into which Spanish, Italian and other peoples were assimilated. Race was nearly as divisive a category within the settler community as between settlers and Algerians—and functioned in the colony as almost class-based. But this fantasy of a Latin race was nonetheless crucial in fashioning settler political culture, as Stephen Gosnell has argued. This was a phantasmatic political culture into which Bertrand’s work, which championed settler miscegenation, Latin individualism and

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84 Ibid., p. 21 from mss.
regenerative race war, worked well.\textsuperscript{85} Having discussed metropolitan classicism and colonial demography, it is now possible to examine more intently the strange colonial-classical evangel of \textit{Le Sang des races}.

**Spanish Settlers, Latin Myths**

\textit{Le Sang des races} details the competing pulls of allegiance between Spanish settlers’ regional and national ‘blood origins’ located in Spain, and the allegiance to this new land that reawakened the conquering blood of the Latin race within them—awakened in this colonizing effort on African shores. The principal protagonist is Rafaël. His father Rámon, rejects his own father’s claim that to abandon Spanish allegiance is to abandon one’s blood:

\begin{quote}
Without lifting his eyes to his father, he replied simply:

—No!

All the inertial force of the race appeared in this one word: it was, like a rock, an underacinable will.\textsuperscript{86}
\end{quote}

Rafaël’s argument with his father pits different generations of settlers against one another, with different allegiances—emigration of settlers back to Europe was a regular phenomenon. It also imagines an increasing sense of Algerian identity among a younger generation of Spanish settlers, an identity that is itself an expression of a Spaniard’s innate sense of Latin refusal, awoken from its slumber.

\textsuperscript{85} See Gosnell, \textit{The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria}.
\textsuperscript{86} Bertrand, \textit{Le sang des races}, p. 37.
in the energizing vitalism that was colonization in Algeria. Bertrand’s characters present competing notions of Barrèsian roots: the roots one has in the lands of one’s ancestors’ tombs, and the “underacinable” roots of one’s forward-looking, conquering Latin heritage. The latter, as promised in his dissertation, will win out in the end.

For Bertrand, French identity was constructed in opposition to the enemy at the Southern bastion of France—in other words in North Africa. This idea of a Southern bastion was Bertrand’s reimagining, or to be more accurate literary rebranding, of Barrès’ notion of the ‘Eastern bastion’ of France: Alsace-Lorraine. If Barrès’ enemy there was Germanic, Bertrand’s here was Islamic. But Bertrand’s characters here are Spanish—who only half-civilized, in this “half-savage” land, recapture the rapacious glory of their conquistador ancestors.

The novel’s principal protagonist, Rafaël, was a Spanish settler and carter of the southern routes of Algeria who gradually, after traveling across a vibrant Algeria, visiting his ancestors’ decadent homeland of Spain, and after some reflection, embraces a bold future on African shores, where the Latin genius of conquest and individual excellence that lies within his blood will be reawakened

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87 For Bertrand, the Spanish character was marked by “his absence of servility, or that which survives in him of the Medieval man, that which he has kept of the cavalier, and even his honour. All this can coexist in the same individual with the most barbarous cruelty and most atrocious fanaticism. And finally the Spaniard is a special case, it is a racial and psychological composite of particular complexity. On this point I find in Chateaubriand these lines that, effectively enough, sum up my thinking: ‘Nothing happens over the Pyrenees like elsewhere. There is something in the mix of blood, of Romans, Visigoths and Goths that confounds all calculation.’” Bertrand, Mes Années d’apprentissage, p. 261.
88 Bertrand, Le sang des races, p. 38.
in the struggle with an inhospitable but beautiful land. Rafaël not only conquers the land, but ‘miscegenates’ with women of all races. The virile Rafaël has sex with French, Jewish and settler and it is implied Muslim women,—but Algerian women remain unnamed prostitutes, whether Ouled Naïl women or a woman of the Casbah gesturing obscenely. Rafaël and Pépico ascend into the Casbah, not to symbolically discover the exoticized mysteries of the Orient, but to frequent what in Bertrand’s gaze is a degraded and anonymous domain, sexualized but monstrous.\textsuperscript{89}

If the novel is focused on a family of Spanish settlers, and their journey across Algeria and Spain, the Algeria they encounter is evoked in lyrical passages. As Rafaël reflects upon this land, it will draw him closer to his Latin roots, and by implication, the reader of this book by means of Bertrand’s lyricism. Rafaël, on the carters’ journey, reflects upon an evening sky that murmurs in its beauty the truths of West and East, and a darkening land that evokes in the viewer a Latin heroism. This evocation of beauty and heroism, as seen by the protagonist, is also explicitly foregrounded in its literariness, as written by Bertrand.

In the distance, three mountains, resembling sphinxes, guarded the darker East. Little stars lit themselves in the clear skies of the West. Rafaël joyously thought of the final stage. And he remembered the adventures from the book [Dumas’ Les Trois mousquetaires] that Philippe had just finished, and simultaneously in the beautiful forms

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., pp. 71, 49.
of the land and sky, ideas of courage and heroic beings occupied his thoughts. 90

Rafaël’s reflection on heroism is evoked by a lyrical tableau that orders his soul and inspires courage, simultaneously conflated with a French literary tradition of heroism. Bertrand’s Spanish heroes, in their becoming Latin conquerors, are a new myth of Latin conquest in a time of metropolitan decadence. This heroic myth is not from the French Age classique of Dumas’ Musketeers, but unfolds in a strange half-savage land, between East and West, focused on half-civilized Spanish workers. Algeria’s lyrical beauty impresses heroism upon these workers, as Bertrand’s prose attempts to impress upon the reader. This was a classicism designed to inspire metropolitan readers with its scenes of classical lyricism, the Latin settler’s brutality, with Bertrand as classicizing legislator of modern passions. It is not a French past, but a Latin future in the colony that will regenerate decadent modernity. Maurras, simultaneously complimenting and teasing Bertrand (Bertrand who in his dissertation called for the abandonment of servile imitation of the ancients) acknowledged that it was lyrical in many parts, and there were even rhetorical passages in the novel that “had a strong echo of Homer.” 91 Algeria inspires and reinvigorates a simple and rude settler people as they reflect upon its majestic beauty, as the protagonist Rafaël does in crucial

90 Ibid., p 230.
91 Maurras also shows his familiarity with Bertrand in this passage of his review, by identifying him as an instructor of rhetoric at the lycée d’Alger. Maurras, “Revue Littéraire,” Revue Encyclopédique, vol. 9, 1899, p. 504. Maurice Ricord details the manner in which Bertrand evoked landscapes as romantic paintings, as in the oasis at El-Kantara. Ricord, Ricord, Louis Bertrand, l’Africain, pp. 342-344.
scenes, and sounding more like Bertrand philosophizing on classical beauty than a Spanish carter as Émile Baumann pointed out in his assessment of Bertrand’s early works. But it is not really about the characters who gaze upon this lyrical tableau, it is not they who participate in this narrative about a regenerated and creative form of Latin identity, but the French metropolitan readers of the novel addressed by Bertrand, as he fashions this new myth of Latin regeneration and settler supremacy on the other side of the Mediterranean for them.

Maurras had especially disliked the novel for focusing on Spanish instead of French settlers, but Bertrand’s work actually resolves the anxieties of the period by finding Spanish settlers, inasmuch as they become revitalized on Algerian shores, to completely renounce their Spanish origins and embrace their new race as Algerians, building the future of France. Here, the perceived threat of Spanish settlers upsetting French rule is, as in the more optimistic demographic studies, flipped on its head. In Bertrand’s formulation however, the Spanish will exemplify the ideal of Latin regeneration, and thus teach the decadent French how not only to revivify themselves, but also form a strong enough race of settlers to replace Algerians as the new ‘Africans’ of this land.

After the death of his brother, Rafaël finally achieves a climactic epiphany that roots him in the colony, as he meditates upon the tombs in the Muslim cemetery of El Kettar in Algiers. Here he and his companion Juanète ponder this

92 Maurras saw this work not as a work about the French conquest, but “the conquest of Algeria by the Spanish race.” Maurras, “Revue Littéraire,” *Revue Encyclopédique*, vol. 9, 1899. P. 504.
“garden of the dead,” — a crucial point of reflection for Rafaël, as well as Bertrand, as ‘Garden of Death’ would serve as the title of his published tour of Algeria and Tunisia, *Le Jardin de la mort*. In the Muslim cemetery, they walk amid naked Algerian children playing and unveiled “Moorish” women, themselves sitting among the tombs. Rafaël again reflects while in this cemetery, and in this land that does not yet possess the tombs of his ancestors:

-‘Do you known what I think Juanète? I would like to be buried here.... not over there,’ he said, in pointing his finger towards Saint-Eugène, towards the Christian cemetery... ‘Here one must sleep well!’
  He stood up, A great calm filled him. Little by little, the memory of his dead brother disappeared. He felt less afraid of dying.

Rafaël imagines his remains will be entombed, in this garden of the dead. His progeny will have his and his generation’s tombs to reflect upon. In his future-facing reverie, he imagines their reveries of the past will be focused on his generation of men of action whose tombs will function to root future generations to the land. Bertrand’s climactic moment in the novel is another instance in which he is referencing Barrès’ ‘cult of the dead’, in which individuals are rooted to the nation by their reflection upon the dead and the land. He is also revising Chateaubriand’s melancholia for a lost age—but here the vitality of a lost age has returned again, on the frontier of the Republic. In this energized colony, there is no reflecting upon the dead, only the assurance that future generations will reflect upon this heroic generation. Rafaël and his settler descendants will displace Algerians even in their gravesites, because of settler vitality and
productivity. Even tombs will be expropriated for the colonial oeuvre, to build sites of melancholia for a future Latin race to reflect upon this era of creative energy and vitalism. The settlers will possess these tombs, markers of a permanent presence, and finally feel a sense of home. The vitalism of the Spanish settler only highlights the moribund, even cadaverous nature of Algerians in this work. The dispossession and destitution of Algerians is not presented as a sign of their immiseration by French colonialism. Instead, Bertrand contrasts their inherent destitution to the vitalism of the settlers. These barbarians will be swept aside and be forgotten, in a future that will be for Latins. The very presence of Algerians “had the effect upon [Rafaël] as if they were vermin crawling over his body.”93 Rafaël’s and his generations’ participation in this conquest, unlike effete metropolitan French and destitute indigenous Algerians, will make a future that will be commemorated, rather than commemorate the examples of the past. This climax of the novel finds Rafaël finally able to achieve peace, and a sense of belonging in the colony. The denouement finds this carter married and heading back out on his routes du sud, a proud worker of a new race, unlike the degenerate labourers of the metropole. Here French cultural stasis and Algerian atavism are superseded by a revivified Latin people, who will replace the indigenous Algerians as the new natives of Algeria. A new people are born in a novel in which Bertrand seeks to create a new classicism.

93 Bertrand, Le sang des races, p. 226.
**Fantasies of Colonial Regeneration and the Fin-de-Siècle**

The setters’ original Latin genius, dormant in their bood, is reawakened in their struggles to colonize this country. Mediated by Bertrand for a metropolitan reading public, their struggles repeat and resolve in novel form the aesthetic aims of classical regeneration. The novel aims to reinvigorate the Latin qualities dormant within a people in a decadent metropole through a spectacle of a lyrical classicism, a refoundation of Latin values, on African shores. His dissertation had identified a Romantic solution that would overcome the classical oscillation between the servile imitation of the ancients and that of foreign contagion. His classicism was instead, putatively, possessed of a barbarous force; one that would return to the original classical genius of Latin creativity by translating the lyrical beauty of nature in new and original ways, and thus create new forms for, rather than of, imitation. It sought to reestablish the originary Latinizing genius which the modern French had fallen from into decadence, and thus place Bertrand in the position of the lyricist of French values. Bertrand presents in his novel a remarkable solution to the classicist conundrum identified in his dissertation, a solution that he finds in Algeria, as had Gide with another neo-classicist work, *Les Nourritures terrestres.* Colonial Algeria was a perfect setting to present to

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94 Bertrand and Gide were of course very different. The former was a Dreyfusard who would be drawn increasingly to fascism; the latter was an anti-Dreyfusard who would later oppose fascism. Both were onetime companions of members of the neo-classical revival of the 1890s as well as Barrès. Each became landmark French authors through their writings of self-discovery in Algeria.
metropolitan readers the rebarbarization of an originary classical genius, 
invigorated by the lyrical beauty in nature. And for Bertrand, the originary 
classical genius of the Latin race is found in this novel not in the archaeological 
past, but in the existing ethnographic examples embodied by the settlers. The 
protagonists reawaken within themselves the originary and barbarous 
conquering genius of their Latin forbears as they struggle in this land. His 
classicism was most fully realized in a novel set in Algeria, meditating on the 
foundation of a new Latin race that would exist in opposition to, and in imitation 
of, the conquering vitality of the barbarian, but rooted to a Greco-Latin tradition 
that was the foundation of French civilization. His characters were ideal classical 
types in this colonial drama: the enemy barbarian, the over-civilized decadent, 
and between them, in the form of the Spanish settler, the virile conqueror of a 
new colony—matching Bertrand’s view of a new Symbolist-inflected classicism. 
The Latin settler had a real referent. The Latin settler was not just a fantasy of 
Bertrand’s writing. But in his writing, it was also an aesthetic symbol of national 
regeneration, located between foreign barbarism and imitative stasis. In his early 
work, his image of the settler is as much a Symbolist thesis on French literature as 
it is an aestheticized solution to Algerian demographic panics.

Bertrand’s novel was about a new Latin race forming in Algeria. If in his 
own memoirs he stressed his individual role in creating this Latin myth, it was a

Each drew upon classicist aesthetic movements of the 1890s. Each also privileged a French 
nationalism and classicism against Barrésian ones—and both were judged to be Barrésians 
themselves.
pastiche of various colonial, reactionary and modernist components circulating in various permutations among the different subcultures of artists, scholars and administrators with which he himself circulated along the routes of Greater France. Bertrand would draw together these various components into a neotraditionalist myth about the colony and for French audiences. His aesthetic-political myth of a new settler race in formation would be amenable to later settler writers seeking to form a colonial literary school, as well as colonial political organizations seeking unifying myths by which to emphasize settler unity and revitalization in opposition to an enemy barbarian.

**Conclusion**

One of the more powerful symbols of national regeneration among neotraditionalists was Bertrand’s particular, and popular, representation of the Algerian settler—a new myth of Latin renewal that looked not to a Latin past, but a Latin future on other shores. Bertrand’s rebarbarized settler was a neo-classical Symbol; an Idealist form in the image of the settler created to provoke metropolitan audiences into regeneration and revitalization. And despite his work not initially being intended as colonial literature, this image of Latin renewal that he fashioned was so successful as colonial propaganda that it was utilized by settler elites as the basis for their own fantasies of a cohesive Algerian settler culture that we examine in Chapter Five. It was a myth so successful that
its function as aesthetic strategy by a Symbolist and classicist in disputation with his neo-traditionalist colleagues has been forgotten. It was a convenient amnesia that would reorder these avant-garde ideas as settler culture, and as we see next chapter, fascist culture—as changing political and social realities invested these neo-traditional aesthetic-political strategies with new significance, and Bertrand studiously applied this world-view, born out of the specific circumstances of 1890s aesthetic movements, to these modern horizons of French culture and politics. His fantasy of a rebarbarized people, willing a new future for France into being, or rather, their example he held up as he willed a new future for France, would be brought home with him at the very turn of the century. When he returned, he found a Paris in the midst of the 1900 Exhibition. The faces of foreigners in the crowds filled him with dread. More than ever the lessons he learned on the “routes du sud” were needed, or so he thought. He would refashion France in Algeria’s image, and save Western Civilization from encroaching foreign barbarism by rebarbarizing France itself. This was a journey that would take him to Rome and Munich, in search of other barbarisms to mimic, of new frontiers and fantasies.
CHAPTER FOUR

From Colonialism to Fascism: Louis Bertrand’s France

“...without constant contact with the barbarian, the civilized becomes soft by a sense of well-being, over-refined by a moral and intellectual culture that neglects reality. There in the colony he senses the necessity to rebarbarize oneself to adapt to a new milieu.”
-Louis Bertrand, “Nietzsche et la Méditerrannée”

“Secret societies proliferate from one corner to the other of our poor country. We can only defeat them with their own weapons: infiltration, the creation of cells, and the enlistment of all the savior forces of the nation. Stand a group of national salvation against each revolutionary group. Have our people occupy the positions of command. Counteract the work of each suspect official with their double who surveils them. All this is the foundation of a revolutionary organization.”
-Louis Bertrand, “Comment résister?” in Le Livre de consolation

“First we must study how colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism.”
-Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme*

By the early part of the twentieth century, Bertrand was and thereafter remained an unceasing advocate for French colonialism in Algeria. And he constantly reminded his readers, in essays and books, particularly in *Le Mirage oriental* (1909), *Le Sens de l’ennemi* (1917), and *Devant L’Islam* (1923) that a perennial Muslim barbarism—manifested in the form of racialized workers and migrants, anti-colonialists in the eastern Mediterranean, or indigenous Algerians living among the settlers—was both a deadly enemy and a reinvigorating presence.
against which French people could regenerate their dormant Latin character in an existential struggle—in mimicry of this barbarous other, a barbarous other that was structured according to his neo-classicist concept of Latinité.¹

Bertrand was to many contemporaries the foundational colonial novelist of Algeria; for some he was a notable fin-de-siècle classicist and proponent of Latinité who had also become an important conservative voice in the Catholic revival; by the 1930s, he was also one of the principal fascist intellectuals of France, certainly one of the most pro-Nazi. Bertrand the neo-traditionalist author and essayist somehow came to connect his fin-de-siècle dreams for an incipient settler race in Algeria to his fantasies of a fascist France in the 1930s. There are perhaps surprising, but nonetheless concrete connections between his championing of a new race of Latin settlers in 1890s Algeria and his call for a new race of fascist leaders in 1930s France.

A Colonial Mimicry

It is important to examine Bertrand’s strategy of a ‘colonial mimicry’ because the idea of mimicry was such an important component of his conceptualization of colonialism and barbarism. But when we look at mimicry in this context, in his context, it was not just a mimicry by the colonized of the colonizer, but by the colonizer of the colonized. This reverses contemporary

postcolonial theory that tends to privilege mimicry as a liberatory performance that undermines the colonialist. For Homi Bhabha, mimicry is an ambiguous position in which the regard between colonizer and colonized is upset in the incomplete, imperfect, and parodic performance of assimilative imitation. For Bhabha, the performance is of the colonized mimicking the colonizer. Yet in this historical context, there was clearly the reverse at play: mimicry was a central preoccupation and strategy of elites producing French identities in the colonial era. 2

I contend that in the specific context of elite debates about identity in Greater France, mimicry of what was not French was a crucial means of establishing a performed colonial and metropolitan identity. This performance was not one that disrupted colonial ideology. Far from it. If mimicry is a term that is presented as a liberatory strategy in many postcolonial studies, in the specific historical context of subcultures to which Bertrand belonged, it was a term central to conceptualizing how French identity, Latin identity, and settler identity were created and maintained.

The importance of this ‘colonial mimicry’ was not only a peculiarity of Bertrand’s work alone. A few examples might be useful in establishing that mimicry was a central preoccupation for intellectuals defining Frenchness in this period. As discussed in Chapter Two, imitation was the endless abyss of mimicry

2 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).
from which the aesthetic, and political, program of neo-classicists was fashioned—and the entry point for Bertrand’s discussions of mimicry. This imitative basis of French authenticity repeatedly manifested itself in discussions of French colonialism, which is unsurprising given how often Rome was the model against which French imperialism was measured. Bertrand’s university instructor, the sociologist and theorist of imitation Gabriel Tarde, believed that the Romans, by providing the French such a clear example of genius to imitate, while the French wholeheartedly continued to imitate their example and define themselves in repetition of this original genius, had thus created through the imitative actions of the French an immortal Roman Empire that never actually fell to the barbarian hordes. Instead the Roman Empire continued on in the repetitious and imitative actions of the descendants of the Gallic barbarians it had conquered and assimilated.

At the height of modern French imperialism, Tarde argued that the ancient spirit of Rome continued to colonize France as France’s intellectuals servilely continued to imitate it in endless heteronymy, assimilated barbarians still. The more they clung to their own national specificity, the more they betrayed their essentially derivative nature. In this cultural fantasy, France was still being colonized by an Empire millennia gone even as it was propagating

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3 Gabriel Tarde, “Impérialisme,”.
Greco-Latin tradition in its own contemporary overseas empire. Another of Bertrand’s teachers, Gaston Boissier, asked in his study of Roman Algeria:

By what procedures did they serve to implant their civilization in the middle of these barbarian people, and to render it so blooming that Africa thus produced an abundance of Latin writers, and at one moment seemed more Roman than even Italy and Rome? For that the inquiry that we wanted can be complete, we must ask the Romans to also take a part of it: I believe that if we know how to ask, they have much to teach us.4

For Boissier, the Romans remained for contemporary French imperialists teachers whose lessons must be assimilated, even as they sought to assimilate and pacify Algerians.5 This was the point of departure for Jacobin republican Onésime Reclus’ studies of France and Algeria. The conquest of Algeria was for Reclus, like other colonial writers, also explicitly compared to Rome, but to a Rome that had, prior to this, colonized and transformed France itself, now mimicking its own conquerors:

The leader who decided Gaul was Roman—Caesar—introduced our home to the blood of Italy and the Latin tongue. Their blood could not defeat indigenous blood, but that language killed the Gauls. Two or three hundred years sufficed for this work of death: what could illiterate, simple people, with only songs and some proverbs, do against the literary language spoken by the masters of the world, language of soldiers, lawyers, judges, tax collectors, merchants, language of the baths and of the circuses?6

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5 Raymond Betts’s still influential Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory 1890-1914 demonstrates that “many French imperialists saw the idea of colonial assimilation as part of France’s Latin nature”. Arnaud and Méray in Les colonies françaises: organisation administrative, judiciaire, politique et financière, argued that assimilation “has been the preference of peoples of Latin origins, thus imitating the methods of Roman civilization.” Betts, Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory 1890-1914 (Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 27.
6 Onésime Reclus, France, Algérie et colonies (1886, o.v. 1880).
The French colonization of Algeria, in the writings of Reclus, merely mimicked, repeated and extended the logic of Latin linguistic imperialism, a logic that was France’s patrimony. So two peoples, Gauls and Berbers, who had been colonized by the Romans, were acting out a strange pantomime of antiquity. At least this was the repeated implication of a French emulation of Roman imperial precedent—one that also served to create a fantasy kinship between French and Algerian. In an address in Algiers after the Great War, Bertrand argued that Gallic and Berber peoples were united in their shared patrimony as both being barbarians civilized by the Romans—and that this classical past could be utilized as a point of common reference for the building of a new (French) Algeria.

So the colonizer too is a mimic, a barbarian mimicking previous colonizers; Bertrand’s texts call for the mimicry of Romans and Greeks, but also seek to escape the servile imitation of classical precedent. How is this escape effected? In the previous chapter, we examined Bertrand’s conflation of Symbolist aesthetics and colonialist politics, and how his early works operated by simultaneously regenerating a decadent France and a decadent neo-classical aesthetics. These concerns continued to operate in his later writings, brought back to European shores. For Bertrand, Latin metropolitans in the colony ambiguously rebarbarized themselves as savages, as they relinquished their civility in order to maintain and bolster their civilization, just as he saw neo-classicism being regenerated by an infusion of exotic and foreign imagery. For
Bertrand, Latins were blended and reordered, hybridized and rebarbarized in a colonial setting. Their significance in his works was doubled: the settler was rebarbarized as a worthy opponent against an oriental barbarism (shifting the field of debate away from colonial occupation), just as rebarbarization in the colony was a worthy symbol of French national regeneration back home.

Bertrand’s settlers were simultaneously symbols of a regenerated France, and thus in his literary works were icons for the regeneration of a bourgeois French readership, but settlers were also presented as actual agents themselves, active in regenerating the French nation through their labours. They were, in every way, France’s salvation.

Bertrand’s colonial mimicry, a mimicry of barbarism in order to defeat barbarism, is central to understanding his aestheticized politics, and the ways in which it changed over the course of his life. Bertrand sought to inoculate French and Western civilization against a foreign barbarism—a barbarism that appeared as Muslim and German, Communist and capitalist. And this underlying structure, that civilization needed to rejuvenate itself by mimicking a barbarous enemy, remained remarkably constant through his life’s work. This chapter seeks to understand his developing fascism through this lens of a colonial mimicry. First, it looks to his changing view of Muslims at the frontier of French identity, and then it looks to his later constructions of Germans as enemy barbarians worthy of mimicry. In either case, it was not actual Muslims, or actual Germans,
he sought to mimic in his works, but their spectacular image as the enemy alien—an image of a foreign, savage barbarism that would be liberatory and revivifying when emulated by Latin peoples.

**From Cosmopolitan Barbarian to Conservative Catholic**

To understand Bertrand’s changing attitudes towards Muslims means picking up his story as he returned to France from Algeria in 1900. He began teaching at Montpellier, where ill-health, and controversies with school administrators, would dog him. At the turn of the century, upon his return to France, Bertrand was self-identifying as a barbarian against an over-civilized, necrotic metropole. It was as if it was not only in his novels that the settler-symbol of a barbarous neo-classicism was returned to the metropole: he was going to embody this barbarous neo-classicism as part of his own performed identity as a rebarbarized intellectual.

Bertrand later became a Maurrasian neo-traditionalist, a critic of Romanticism, and political anti-Semite in the inter-war period. But during the fin-de-siècle, he was a Dreyfusard, Symbolist, and avowed cosmopolitan. As we saw in the previous chapter, the fin-de-siècle anti-Semitic riots in Algeria served as the foundational myth of a Latin settler race for a number of settler intellectuals. If Bertrand used racist Jewish stock characters with slightly less frequency (and only slightly less antipathy) than his Arab ones, he was decidedly
opposed to ‘political’ anti-Semitism during the anti-Semitic riots in Algeria.

However, it is important to understand that for Bertrand this was in no way due to any sense of sympathy or solidarity with Algerian Jews, but rather for fear that the deadly anti-Semitic riots in Algeria were working to the advantage of left-wing parties in the colony.7

If he later became famous as the defender of Western civilization against Oriental barbarism, his own phantasmatic relationship to civilization and barbarism was much more ambiguous in this period than might be supposed. What is missing from critical accounts of Bertrand’s life is a sense of dynamism and change over time, change that makes sense of how his works evolved from the 1890s through the 1930s, from province, to colony, to nation, and back. In a 1900 letter to Gasquet which he wrote upon his return to France, this future Action Française ally critiqued Barrès and Maurras for their opportunism in politicizing anti-Semitism and regionalism—likely due to his antipathy to socialist anti-Semitism in the colony. After the ‘excitement’ of the 1898 anti-Semitic riots in Algeria, he found, perhaps defensively, the cultural movements in Provence to which he returned a political wasteland. He was obviously disappointed by the directions neo-traditionalism had taken in his absence. He remained convinced, after Algeria, even when back in France, that the regeneration of the nation would not be achieved by backwards-looking French

7 He also makes this clear in a letter to Barrès in 1900. See Fonds Barrès, “18 lettres de Louis Bertrand à Maurice Barrès,” BNF manuscrit. See also his letters to Joachim Gasquet and Émile Baumann through 1898-1899. Bertrand, Terre de resurrection.
neo-classicist movements or through the political reform of a decadent state, but instead by emulating the example of overseas Latin icons forged in existential colonial violence. And he himself embodied its avant-garde barbarism. He wrote to Gasquet:

You have already treated me as a barbarian. But it is true! And I am proud. I am a barbarian, an intoxicated cosmopolitan, especially since I have seen the void that is your cities and fatherlands! Furthermore, I am convinced that it is barbarism that will bring back the Old World. The colonial wars are bringing it forth. On the eve of the invasions, it is better to be with the conquering hordes than with the sophists who dissertate on the best form of government, or the patriotic rhetoricians with their speeches in the Senate...

Here Bertrand repudiates the neo-traditionalism of Barrès and Maurras, but does so in way that fashions himself almost as a character in a Symbolist novel.

Compare this letter from Bertrand to the following passage from Jean Lorrain’s *Le Vice errant*:

He called for the destruction and conflagration of this city that baffled him. He called for a conflagration and destruction to be visited upon this old Europe that corrupted him, by fire from the sky and from the Barbarians. And this furious agony had something grandiose about it. Hallucinating, wracked with spasms and terror, he called on the Asiatics and their future invasion, their vengeful deluge upon the decomposition of the Old World.

The difference with Bertrand’s performance as nemesis to European decadence was that in his writing the barbarians were actually rebarbarized and regenerated European settlers, and in this case Bertrand himself, rather than ‘Asiatics’.

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Bertrand’s early work does not betray, to borrow Nordau’s formulation, any neurasthenic fears about “Asiatics and their future invasion.” In fact, Muslims are repeatedly shown as having been defeated, in decline, and in a decadence that mirrors European degeneration. But his later works, post-1906, are obsessed with that very idea. His works after 1906 are preoccupied by the image of the Orient as the site of a dynamic and lethal threat to Western Civilization. Why was this? What happened in these years that had not happened in his years in Algeria? What was suddenly changing before Bertrand’s touristic Mediterranean gaze, in the form of this supposedly monolithic and static enemy? To understand this requires in general terms an awareness of the force of the Catholic revival after the legislation separating church and state in 1905, but it also requires a specific investigation of how Arabs and Muslims he met after Algeria changed his understanding of politics in the colonial era, and the changing strategies of resistance to colonialism Muslims practiced and shared across the Mediterranean.

His letters and writings at the turn of the century seem in many ways distant from his later preoccupations: he fashions himself as a cosmopolitan opponent of Barrès and Maurras, but would later become one of the leading neotraditionalists of inter-war France, and an important ally of the Action Française. He was (according to his own self-fashioning) committed against anti-Semitism, and would then later write a hagiography of Hitler. How was it that Bertrand
moved towards a Maurrasian politics? Although scholars locate Bertrand’s arrival to Algeria as the significant transformative moment for his colonialist world-view, this is actually quite difficult to establish with any historical precision—except if one relies on the semi-fictional accounts in his much-later published memoirs. But these memoirs are retroactive constructions, that emplot his own life in the stories of the semi-autobiographical character of ‘Jean Perbal’. These accounts are of his life as the journey of a rejuvenated Latin transformed, and in turn transforming, French civilization—a memoir fashioned as his own peculiar neo-classical Bildung that would often invoke retroactive ‘premonitions’ of Saharan deserts in viewing the fields of northern France, and identify Lorraine cathedrals with Muslim architecture.

But if there were differences between his earlier and later preoccupations, there was nonetheless considerable continuity from his pre-Algerian to post-Algerian period. He continued to identify as a Symbolist, cosmopolitan, avant-garde, literary (though not political) anarchist from the late 1880s until the early years of the twentieth century, after Paris, after Aix, after Algiers, and after several years in Montpellier. If one follows the development of his writings, and private correspondence carefully, it was actually in the period between 1905-6, after living in Montpellier, and Algeria before that, that his political views of Latins and barbarians, and French identity, changed. This was of course the period in which the neo-traditionalist revival really accelerated in popularity and
intensity. But for Bertrand, it was also a period in which he was traveling in southern France and then across the eastern Mediterranean. His transformation had not been precipitated by his ‘discovery’ of the Algerian ‘Orient’ in the 1890s so much as by his 1900s investigation of the working-class neighbourhoods of Marseilles, in order to establish color for his novel *L’Invasion*, and his later tour of the Eastern Mediterranean where he witnessed the broadening appeal of both Egyptian nationalism and religious reformism at Al-Azhar. The initial exoticized excursion into working-class Marseilles, and his ‘discovery’ of a working-class Muslim population on French shores would disturb him greatly. He observed “among the workers of Marseilles, especially in the Muslim milieux, among our Algerians and Tunisians, a recrudescence of revolutionary spirit, which, among them, was but the mask of an impatient nationalism and exacerbated xenophobia.”

This ‘discovery’ of an exotic and ‘xenophobic’ Muslim France would lead him in a months-long adventure in 1906 across the Mediterranean to Istanbul, Beirut, Jerusalem, Cairo and Athens in search of the threatening sources of a regenerated and rejuvenated Muslim Mediterranean— the mirror image of his Latin renaissance.

Bertrand’s representations of Muslims after 1906 were no longer the erased, almost fading figures in his early novels, but vibrant, resurgent, and threatening enemies, bent on “*a revanche Islamique*” — here Bertrand borrows the

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loaded French term of “Revanchisme” utilized by French nationalists against an occupying Imperial Germany.\textsuperscript{11} Revanchisme, which helped constitute his generation’s politics, and which informed his initial impressions of politics as a Lorraine youth living under German occupation at the Bastion de l’Est, would be displaced onto fears of Muslims rising up against French occupation at the Bastion du Sud.

It was a new confrontation with a now different—if still essentialized, monolithic, and amorphous—Muslim people, no longer presented in decline as in his early Algerian novels, but triumphing against French imperialism as he had hoped France would against Germany. And the examples of Turks, Arabs and/or Muslims challenging his colonial triumphalism was the catalyst for his embracing a Catholic conservatism more in league with Maurras. It would also transform his later writings on Germany and France. This shift in Bertrand’s work was due to his growing awareness of Muslim people creating increasingly popular political alternatives to European hegemony. It was not his journeys across Algeria or France, but across the Eastern Mediterranean that would be the crucial event in awakening his anxieties in the face of an anti-colonial Muslim reformist movement. In particular, it was his encounters with intellectuals like Egyptian nationalist Mustafa Kamil in Egypt at the height of the Nahda, or Cultural Renaissance, that marked a sea change in his writings about Islam, and

\textsuperscript{11} Bertrand, \textit{Devant l’Islam}, p. 62.
about French identity on the borders of the Mediterranean. It is not an exaggeration to say that if many assimilationist Algerians, like Ferhat Abbas and Rabah Zenati, often wrote in 1920s and 30s in reaction to Bertrand’s xenophobia, Bertrand’s post-1906 works exploring French identity are in fact reactions to the works of intellectuals involved in the Arab Nahda, which would also begin to offer Algerians different options and possibilities, as Algerian intellectuals elaborated a contested Algerian nationality.

In his early novels, like Le Sang des Races, although referred to as part of his Algerian cycle, the action actually takes place across the Mediterranean, with Latin protagonists migrating from nation, to region, to colony, and back. And it is in these movements in the Mediterranean in an age of mass migration, tourism, and imperialism, that the Latin race is reborn. Bertrand in Provence was finally getting some recognition for his early works, especially his La Renaissance classique (1903) and Le Jardin de la mort (1905). Each of these works was primarily seen, not as a colonial text, but evidence of a Provençal regionalist Renaissance of Latinité— even though Le Jardin de la mort was about Algeria and Tunisia.

Alphonse Roche’s excellent if neglected 1954 study of the “Idée Latine” among Provençal intellectual subcultures (especially the Félibrige), highlights the importance of Bertrand’s writing on Latin regionalism in early twentieth-century Provence. Roche observes how Bertrand’s Le Jardin de la mort, describing and
prescribing a fusion of Latin races in the colonies, was championed by regionalist Charles Méré as the Pan-latinist solution to Pan-Germanism.12

Bertrand was more interested in a neo-classicist representation of Latin regeneration in the Mediterranean generally than writing novels or essays restricted to the Maghrib specifically. So he began researching Marseilles’ working-class neighbourhoods to write a novel of Latin immigration: not to Algeria, but to France. Bertrand relied on his domestic servant, like a native informant, to introduce him to the Italian immigrants in Marseilles, France’s *Porte d’Orient*. He eventually published the novel in 1907, titled *L’Invasion*. It was the flip-side of *Le Sang des races*. Instead of Spanish working-class immigrants to Algeria, it was about Italian working-class immigrants to France. Instead of the Spanish Latins who transcended class divisions and thus served as examples to a decadent metropole, he presented Italian workers who slavishly followed the degenerate gangsterism of trade unionists and revolutionaries, and thus served as a warning to metropolitan readers. Bertrand later wrote that the differences in these works were easily explained by the political exigencies of the time. During the Great War, he would rehabilitate Italian Latins as a potential source for rebarbarizing French people on French soil— their presence would offset perceived metropolitan demographic crises and they would, through inter-marriage, toughen French society.13

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13 See Bertrand, *Le Sens de l’ennemi*. 235
But in researching this novel, there was something even more troubling to Bertrand that he found in his ‘explorations’ of working-class Marseilles: French Muslims who he feared were drawn to revolution. Bertrand was concerned that this revolutionary spirit among Maghrebi Marseillais was sparked by the Japanese victory over the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War. Bertrand decided to investigate this phenomenon further, and his old university professor and neo-classicist Ferdinand Brunetière assisted him in winning funding for an investigative journey across the Mediterranean, which included a stipend from the prestigious *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Bertrand’s journey, over the course of 1906, awakened him to new dangers facing his vision of France and Algeria, but inasmuch as this assignment also helped establish him as a regular contributor to *Revue des Deux Mondes*, it guaranteed him financial independence and considerable prestige. He remained one of the most prolific contributors to this conservative journal until his death.

His journey took him across the Eastern Mediterranean, through ‘Constantinople’, Beirut, Jerusalem, Cairo, and Athens. His essays from this trip (besides the requisite pilgrimage to Athens as was the case with all neo-classicist tourists of the Mediterranean) focused on one phenomenon in particular: anti-colonialism in the form of religious reformism or nationalism. These works reveal a shift in his perceptions about Muslims in the Mediterranean. His trip would

solidify the anxieties he initially felt in Marseilles among Franco-Maghrebi residents, and give form to a new threat that would haunt Bertrand: Muslim religious reformism. In this regard, Bertrand’s work was cutting edge in its colonial anxieties. Many French administrators were still ambivalent or uncertain about the significance of Islamic modernism until the Great War. In Algeria, Sufi brotherhoods and schools were still seen as a source of potential insurrection, though by the inter-war period, Sufi ‘Marabouts’ would be pressed as the colonial bulwark against the threatening reformism of the Association of the Ulemas, inspired by the Salafism of Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashid Rida.

Paris had been an important center in the development of Islamic reformism. After all, Jamal al-din al-Afghani had debated Ernest Renan in the pages of Revue des Deux Mondes when he resided in Paris along with Muhammad ‘Abduh. Bertrand was a student in Paris while they were publishing there. ‘Abduh was also helping modernize Al-Azhar’s curricula at the same time as Bertrand was in Cairo in 1906, and would, along with his student Rashid Rida, exert an important influence on an Islamic modernism in Algeria that would terrify Bertrand in its revolutionary implications.15 However, although their lives criss-crossed each other a number of times in the colonial Mediterranean, there is

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15 See Ali Merad’s discussion of ‘Abduh and Rida in an Algerian context in the excellent Le Reformisme Musulman en Algérie de 1925 a 1940; See also Kamel Chachoua’s Islam kabyle: religion, État et société en Algérie suivi de L’Epître (Rissala) d’Ibnou Zakri (Alger, 1903) Mufti de la Grande Mosquée d’Alger which is an interesting challenge to what Chachoua sees as Merad’s too great a focus on Adelhamid Ibn Badis and Bachir Ibrahimi as representatives of Islamic modernism in Algeria. A general overview of Islamic modernism is of course provided by Albert Hourani, Arab Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939 (Cambridge University Press, 1983).
no evidence they met face-to-face.\textsuperscript{16} They traveled in different circles. Mustafa Kamil, the nationalist leader whom Bertrand interviewed in Egypt, had gained his law degree in Toulouse and cultivated contacts in France, in particular with the influential salonnière Juliette Adam, in order to lobby the French government for support against the British occupation of Egypt.

\textbf{Meeting Mustafa Kamil}

In his trip to the Eastern Mediterranean, Bertrand sought to meet with Turkish and Egyptian nationalists.\textsuperscript{17} With only his own ingenuity to gain him access to Turkish nationalists, his discussion of the “\textit{Jeunes Turcs}” was in the main a Romantic narrative of him surveilling Turks in a cafe as he imagined their conspiracies—a fact that gives pause to what sort of revolutionary activity he thought he saw among Maghrebis in Marseilles. However, he had much more success in Egypt thanks to Juliette Adam providing him introductions to nationalist liberal Mustafa Kamil, the year before Kamil’s death. Given that Kamil had studied law at Toulouse, Bertrand was surprised and pleased to find that they shared a host of acquaintances among French journalists, politicians and writers. His interview with Kamil is interesting in what it suggests about

\textsuperscript{16} Al-Afghani and ‘Abduh were far from the only Muslim intellectuals in nineteenth-century France. Many Turkish, Arab and Afghan intellectuals resided in exile in Paris. For instance, Emir Emin Arslan was published in \textit{Action Sociale}. France was not just a site of Mahgrebi-French communities in Marseilles, but there was a long history of Arabs and Arabo-French peoples in France—and these experiences varied from communities of Arab workers, to students, to exiled intellectuals.

Kamil and reveals about Bertrand. Kamil, who was continuously working for French, Ottoman and German support against the British occupation, seems to have been trying to use this interview to speak to the ties between France and Egypt, and publicize British injustice and atrocities. Bertrand was meanwhile seeking to reveal the current intrigues of the Orient to his readers, and the revolutionary threats posed by Pan-Islamism. But he also clearly admired Kamil’s cultured demeanour—one might say today his cultural capital. Bertrand believed Kamil was mimicking French politics, even worse, the politics of the republican Gambetta—but that his love of Egypt, and Egyptian independence, was absolute.

Bertrand was clearly interested in the revolutionary potential of Turkish and Egyptian nationalists, and was especially interested in their pedagogical programs. Kamil had been trying to organize a secular Egyptian university at the same time as ‘Abduh was seeking to reform Al-Azhar. Bertrand argued that attempts to found anti-colonial nationalist pedagogical programs were the keys to independence for Muslims. He believed that nationalists were operating in imitation of the Japanese who had modernized their education programs and thus been able to defeat an invading European power. Bertrand would remain

obsessed with Muslims gaining access to education, arguing that it was
dangerous to have Muslims educated in Algeria—a position that guaranteed him
the antipathy of every Algerian assimilationist. Although his impressions of
Kamil were largely positive until his report’s conclusion, by the 1920s, his
increasing anxiety regarding Muslim sedition would find him railing against
unnamed attempts by ‘Orientals’ to divide Anglo-French alliances, which had of
course been Kamil’s aim.19 Bertrand’s journalism is of course of limited value in a
number of respects, especially his repeated conflations of Egyptian and Turkish
nationalisms. But for an essay putatively about the nationalist movements of
Turks and Egyptians, he is much more concerned by Pan-Islamism.

His journalism also reveals a tourist confronted by people advancing
shocking Pan-Islamist arguments—or at least arguments he thought would shock
his audience into awakening to the putative Muslim peril. While travelling,
Bertrand was taken aback by an Egyptian who apparently berated him for the
atrocities committed by the French against Muslims in Algeria and Tunisia.
Bertrand pathologized this incident of solidarity by noting the impossibility of
“denying these absurd legends!” He viewed it as a symptom of an increasingly
hostile bourgeois Muslim population that could not help but be led by Pan-
Islamist machinations. For Bertrand, it was the “complicity of the press and
[public] opinion” which created a popular “current of scorn and animosity

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19 See Bertrand’s discussion in the first chapter of Devant L’Islam: “Retour d’Egypte”. Bertrand,
Devant L’Islam, 1-74.
towards France and in general all the European nations that have Muslim
colonies.” These “hostile dispositions, envenomed and capably exploited by
certain Panislamist politicians, do not seem to augur well for us.”

The news in Egypt was not good according to Bertrand. During his time
there he attended an Egyptian conference in which an unnamed lawyer from
Cairo dared to discuss:

what France owed to Islam: 1st its civilization and its sciences; 2nd half
its vocabulary; 3rd what there is best in the character and mentality of
its population, considering that, from the Middle Ages up to the
Revolution of 1789, all the reformers who have worked for its
freedom, Albigois, Vaudois, Calvinists and Camisards,—all these
heretics are probable descendants of Sarracens: it was, pure and
simple, the annexation of France by Mauritania.

Bertrand was clearly not happy to be hearing that France was derivative of
Islamic culture. He might safely be considered an unreliable narrator when it
comes to faithfully recording an argument by a Cairo lawyer about what France
owes Islam, but what is interesting here is Bertrand registering a set of arguments
that would appear in Algeria among Algerian intellectuals from a wide range of
political and religious positions. Chérif Cadi and other contributors to La Voix des
humbles and La Voix Indigène in the 1920s and 30s argued that if France was
worthy of being assimilated into by Muslims, it also owed much of its science
and knowledge to Muslim history in the first place.

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21 Ibid., p. 868.
22 It is not an accident that the integrationist Ferhat Abbas would write under the pseudonym
Kemal Abencérage—the first name from the Atatürk, the second from Chateaubriand’s story of a
Bertrand’s visit to Egypt filled him with dread. He saw an insurgent Pan-Islamism everywhere. It was even manifest, apparently, in the dire threats upon Europe in the form of Egyptian bourgeois tourists. According to Bertrand, they sought revenge against French conquest under Napoleon by an invasion of their own:

Egypt responds to our earlier warrior invasions with invasions of tourists... It has become the fashion among fervent nationalists to push all the way into Spain to meditate in the gardens of Alcazar in Sevilla, or on the patios of Alhambra in Grenada, on the defunct splendours of Western Islam. And there is only one step from here to dreaming of a world federation of all existing Islam.23

As was usual, Bertrand’s image of his enemy was often a mirrored caricature of his own positions and beliefs—a bourgeois tourist advocating the domination of a foreign people.

Finally, Bertrand advances the cliché of Muslims speaking with forked tongues: “Even when they are only addressing Europeans, the thought of these Muslims is still double... they speak two languages at the same time: one is for their own soul, the other for the interlocutor.” He compares their duplicity to that of Freemasons—one of the other fantasized double agents of Greater France in this period. Bertrand’s drawing attention to the doubled meanings of Muslim speakers, on the one hand, is a prophylactic against any positive noise that might be heard from Muslims by French people. On the other hand, it provides him an

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aura of being an expert in Muslim thought and a mediator for a French public (even though he remained incapable or uninterested in reading or speaking Arabic or Berber languages). Muslims could not be trusted because of the fact that they were Muslims. A Muslim public sphere was a distorted public sphere. Muslim women, protested Bertrand, were locked in private subservience—a nimble position to take for this Catholic conservative intellectual opposed to French women’s enfranchisement. 24

And here, in the conclusion of his study, after nothing but earlier praise he suddenly attacks even Mustafa Kamil, suggesting his secularism was a smokescreen (rather than investigating whether Kamil sought alliances between nationalists and religious reformers and for what reasons). What was important

24 For Bertrand, the main protection the West possessed against Pan-Islamism or “Egyptian or Ottoman” nationalists was the “ethnic diversity” of the lands in which Muslims lived. In the Middle East, as opposed to France, he believed ethnicities lived among one another from time immemorial without fusing into a single nation or indeed public. If ethnic diversity was crucial in dividing Muslims, Bertrand was also interested in the “unveiling” or freeing of Muslim women from the oppression of Islam, and here quotes a Mohammed Fary Bey on how he was struck by the absence of young adult women in public when he visited. Ibid., p. 875. In his later collection Le Sens de l’ennemi, Bertrand dedicated an entire essay to the tragedy of Muslim women being forced to don the veil. Bertrand was making a similar argument as settler intellectual Marie Bugéja, a colonial theorist who sought to “free” Algerian women from Algerian male oppression, and argued simultaneously that the way to civilizing and better administering the Muslim (gendered as male) was through ‘his’ woman. Marie Bugéja, Visions d’Algérie (Alger: Baconnier frères, 1932). Algerian assimilationists like Rabah Zenati and contributors to La Voix des Humbles also called for the assimilation of Algerians (again gendered as male) to France through the assimilation of Algerian women. One of the tropes of both settler and Algerian literature of this period, aside from the brief appearance of women in Algerian journals in their own words, was that Algerian women were abstract tropes, treated as hinges upon which the mission civilisatrice rested. The abstracted image of the veiled Algerian Muslim woman was only rivaled by the image of the elder fellah of the Bled, or the image of the rural peasant in the countryside, a prior generation to the urbanized francophone Algerians seeking enfranchisement. For a rare exception to the poverty of sources in women’s voices in this period, see Sehir Hacène’s critique of Bugéja and European feminism in La Voix Indigène, April 21, 1932, and discussed in Sarah Kimble’s “Emancipation through Secularization: French Feminist Views of Muslim Women’s Condition in Interwar Algeria,” in French Colonial History, Vol. 7, 2006, pp. 109-128.
for Bertrand was that this doubled thought reveals that, deep down, Muslims are not free thinkers like the individualist Latins. Instead, they collectively owe their way of thought to Islamic credo. However, Muslims’ “disdain for intellectual life” holds some advantages over Europeans, as they possess “a moral health we no longer possess: their character and thought are immune to our sicknesses and sins.” So Bertrand, after denigrating Muslims, ends by presenting Turkish nationalists as role models for the French themselves, in a language that strongly suggests that Europeans should mimic these qualities:

In Turkey, the military spirit is alive now more than ever. Finally, and this is essential, a great breath of hope animates them. They have the faith, and they have the mob with them, who of course only have a confused notion of a far-off goal to which they are being led. Not only do they respect the old conservative forces of their countries, but they struggle to develop them, to elevate them to their maximum. They preach attachment to their religion, to the traditions of their ancestors. They enthusiastically promulgate dogma. Who does not see that these men, in the midst of a disarmed Europe divided by antinationalist doctrines, are a power with whom we will have to deal with?

Bertrand’s trip to the eastern Mediterranean revealed uneasy truths about a resurgent Muslim renaissance, one that possessed all the qualities he had argued a Latin Renaissance should. The hopeful narratives of his earliest novels, in which joyful barbarized settlers displaced corpse-like Muslims was set aside for a more troubling narrative of a hopeful, socially cohesive and martial Nahda. The

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26 Ibid., p. 878. It is impossible to be sure if there is a connection, but this passage has echoes of Nietzsche’s genealogy of ancient values, as he presents them with their disdain for intellectualism but their possession of moral health.
27 Ibid., p. 878.
strength of the enemy’s traditions and their revival in contemporary society fascinated him and disturbed him. In opposition to this discovery of his, Bertrand thereafter became a Catholic conservative writer preaching a religious neo-traditionalism for France in opposition to the Nahda — and grew closer to Maurras and the Action Française.²⁸ His travel in to the Eastern Mediterranean, “was for me, the starting point of a veritable renewal.” But this trip also allowed him to present himself to a much broader French public as an expert on Islam. He would translate it into a number of books, in which he attacked the “Mirage Oriental” — exotic tropes which blinded French people to the ugly truths of Islam, with Bertrand as guide. This idea of the “Mirage Oriental” was a repeated convention of this later period’s works on Islam. It was not only degenerate colonized Muslims who needed surveilling, but degenerate French who clung to Romantic images of harems, caravans and souks — the Orientalism of ‘A Thousand and One Nights’ instead of the Orientalism of ‘The Blood of Races’.

In works like Le Mirage Oriental and Devant l’Islam Bertrand argued that the Romantic exoticism which presented the tourist or painterly image of Islam to the French was like an ‘Oriental mirage’ for which his work was the best corrective. He now emphasized his work’s role in showing the reality of Muslim

²⁸ Interestingly, Barrès’ trip to the Middle East was also a source of religious renewal for him. Except in Barrès’ case, it was largely inspired by the Maronite Christian-focused nationalism, which he in turn would help shape. Barrès’ last cahier reveals a much more pious man than he had been. Barrès, Mes Cahiers (Paris: Plon, 1929-57), vol. XIV. For a discussion of Bertrand’s affinities with the Action Française, see Wilson, “History and Traditionalism: Maurras and the Action Française.”
savagery and degeneracy, which was how his later 1920 preface to *Le Sang des races* re-interpreted this earlier 1899 work. This was to some degree the reformulation, and foregrounding, of ideas that were already implicit in his earlier novels, inasmuch as he had always presented Muslims as degenerate. But this was also a rebranding of these works’ purpose against a now resurgent Islam. Although Bertrand presented his works as possessing special insight and novelty in this anti-exoticist approach, such a critique of exoticism was itself a standard rhetorical approach to French writing on the Orient. The trope of the Orient as mirage was a cliché that he was rebranding his own, which was evident in earlier settler and French texts, including ones with which Bertrand was very likely familiar, including Jules Aimé Battandier and Louis Trabut’s biological and botanical survey of Algeria *L’Algérie: Le sol et les habitants. Flore, faune, géologie, anthropologie, ressources agricoles et économiques* (1898). Battandier and Trabut introduced their study to the reader with the aim of cutting through the “*pays de mirages*” for the reality of the colonial situation. Also, Charles Maurras had written an essay titled “*Le Mirage d’Orient*” in 1901, based on his trip to Greece. For Maurras, Attic reason was opposed to the formless but intoxicating image of the Orient. In this essay he emphasized the enthralling dangers of a Romanticized Orient, as he searched for a neo-classical Greece. He firmly distinguished that “Attica is not the Orient. It is precisely the opposite of all that

our imagination attaches to the term oriental. It is the land of nuance and smiles, of gracefulness shorn of all softness, of vigorous pleasures well tempered by virtue.”30 Yet it was from Attica, gazing on Greek islands and the sea, that he instead imagined himself before an illusory Asia—gazing upon him as a mysterious totality, and rendering him intoxicated in his returning gaze. From Attica, he looked upon the sea towards the “abyss” of Asia, yet it was of course only the sea he saw. Facing this Orient with its “vague and brilliant unity, too much like confusion, I could not help myself from crying out within, ‘clarity, clarity! like in other matters one might cry ‘sensuality!’”31

This critique of the “Mirage Oriental” had much to do with transforming French people in their relationship to the Nahda, purifying them of exoticist mirages that served to veil their gaze just as Bertrand felt there was the desperate need for increasing surveillance of the enemy. Bertrand would return to Egypt and the Middle East in 1924 after the war, and his impressions were even more troubled—again in specific reaction to Pan-Islamic anti-colonial organization. He

30 Maurras, Quand les Francais ne s’aimaient pas, p. 343.
31 Maurras, Quand les Francais ne s’aimaient pas, p. 349. Almost like Thomas Mann’s Aschenbach, the neo-classicist tourist Maurras “dreamed of the mystical brazier of the Orient which I fixed with lengthy looks charged with a painful curiosity.” He returned down the mountain of Hymetus, but re-ascended ten times to gaze again upon the Orient/Sea, finally to descend “staggering still like a man troubled by Asian wine.” Of course, if the Orient was pregnant with exoticist dangers, neo-classicist travellers to Greece found it as much of a classical mirage. Barrès suggested that to find the lyricism of Greek antiquity, it was better to stay in Provence: “Wherever I go in Provence, I find myself in the heart of antiquity. But if I dare say so, as for myself, this antiquity in Greece was only exoticism.” Maurice Barrès, Le Voyage de Sparte (Paris: Plon, 1922), p. 262.
was now even nostalgic for his earlier trip to Egypt. In “Retour d’Égypte,” he wrote:

I remember! We were masters. We were four or five great hegemonic nations who policed the world. They trembled before us, before our armies and fleets... I remember my first trips to Algeria, Egypt, Syria and Palestine. Nowhere was there the hint of danger. I walked from site to site by foot, with no other weapon than my traveling cane. The indigenous fled at our approach. And when they were tamed, how they strove to serve us. Ah yes, in those days, the universe could be a real spectacle!32

Bertrand’s opposition to an exoticized Romanticism was not so much his opposition to an unreal Orient, but a nostalgic recognition that a Golden Age of colonialism and European supremacy had been lost, and European hegemony was collapsing before his eyes. And the French needed to refocus their image of Islam to one that was dangerous in all its permutations, never charming. He wondered what happened to “the lovely Romantic voyage? Alas, it was an impossible mirage... We had lived unique, incomparable years, without knowing our happiness.”33 His aim in counteracting the “Mirage Oriental” was to prepare the French for the reality of increasing anti-colonial and trans-national organization by Muslims, and see them as they really are:

We have to do away with this stupid adoration of a romantic and conventional Orient that has never existed except in books. Really look

33 Bertrand, Devant L’Islam, 36
the Orientals in the face, eye to eye: *they are our enemies*... Try to make those ridiculous French, who imagine that the entire universe loves them, realize this elementary truth. Force this idea into the skull: the Oriental is our enemy and can be nothing other than our enemy. This however does not mean we cannot make them our ally when circumstances demand. It is time to close the Oriental Bazaar. We do not enjoy contemplating the cemetery that will cut our throats...  

After his 1906 trip across the Eastern Mediterranean, Bertrand was convinced France needed to unify around a neo-traditionalist Catholicism against a religious Renaissance among Muslims. The French, who were colonial masters in Algeria, had to organize against a coming onslaught. But it was also becoming increasingly clear back home, as he wrote of his Mediterranean tour and the threat of Islam, that the next invasion of metropolitan France, was not to

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34 Bertrand, *Devant l’Islam*, 41. For Bertrand, the failure here had been how Arabs had come to accumulate wealth in the colonial period. European powers were, according to Bertrand, enriching the colonized too much, more than the French and English back home. Egyptians under the British, and Algerian and Tunisians under the French, “were presently buying up and conquering the larger portion of the land created and made fertile by use. We are starting again with the Moroccans. One day or another, this wealth, that is the product of our oeuvre, will turn against us. We might say that this offensive of the Oriental banknote against Europe has already, and for some time, begun. In Cairo and in all the Orient, near or far, collections are being gathered for the insurgents of the Riff and the so-called communist propaganda in Algeria and Tunisia. Meanwhile, no one at home has yet advised to pass the collection for a Crusade against the Orient. This aggressive and bellicose wealth is, while waiting for more, translating into a flowering of new wants. The cafes, pastry shops, Tea salons, cinemas and little theatres are multiplying...” in which a “crowd in tarbouche” is clearly “affirming itself more and more, with its desirous thirst and its hatred of the foreigner.” Bertrand, *Ibid.*, 32, 33. Again Bertrand feared what was appearing before him, a growing urban, bourgeois Arab public under British and French rule that was reading Arabic journals and newspapers—an Arab press that was “savagely nationalist when it is not overtly xenophobic.” Bertrand, *Ibid.*, p. 33. It was Egypt that was the source of mirages, an “intoxicating and deceptive beauty [that] is a product of this arid soil. It is on the shores of this shimmering Nile, before these boats that seem to be traveling towards distant paradises, that Gleyre painted in his Illusions perdues... Lost illusions! I fear that this is the label that will from now on seal my oriental memories, my voyager’s emotions.” *Ibid.*, p. 39. He argues that “vagabond” Muslims “in rags” might be indirectly inspired by “Bolshevist influences,” but only “confusedly” inasmuch as they take joy in a far off land where the poor attacked the rich, and “vague rumours” were propagated by “contagion.” *Ibid.*, p. 43

35 He feared that “African and Asiatic” people would “unleash upon the universe the most horrifying carnages.” Bertrand, *Devant l’Islam*, p. 69
be of Italian or Maghrebi workers, or Egyptian bourgeois tourists cum Pan-Islamist warriors. It was going to be a war against another ascendant barbarism: Pan-Germanism. The lessons Bertrand had already learned about Latins in French Algeria, and the threats of a Muslim barbarous other which he sought to inculcate in his audiences, would serve him well through the Great War now against a German enemy. Bertrand, with typical modesty, wrote to Gasquet in the midst of the Great War that he had been prepared, and had been attempting to prepare France, since his first novel:

I am proud that no Frenchman, for fifteen years, has had a greater sense of the enemy, the instinct of imminent catastrophe (except for Léon Daudet); and no one, like I, has had the clear vision of the national tasks at hand, of which the most important is still the question of race. From 1897, with Le Sang des Races, I have been en route. No one, alas! has followed me. Even today, when it is blindingly obvious, I cannot make the French understand that we are lost if we do not come to oppose the Pangermanist bloc with a Latin bloc, that we are a hemorraging people that need to be materially refashioned by mixing with the prolific and brutal people like the Italians and Spanish. I return again to my breeding farm of Algeria. Could what is happening there for Latin emigrants at a small scale, not be done for their countries of origin?

His gaze was turned back to Germany, to the Barbarians to the East. Inasmuch as they were barbarians, they would become orientalized in his writings, and as with his image of a Muslim enemy, he would argue that to oppose their strength was to in some ways mimic them, in order to revivify a decadent France.

36 Although there would continue to be uprisings in Algeria against French rule, even during and after World War I.
37 See Bertrand, Terre de Ressurection, p. 156.
This chapter has illustrated how Bertrand’s writings on Muslims changed in response to specific historical circumstances—his response to the effaced actions of Egyptians, Turks and Algerians—or his own fears. His abstracted image of a revitalized Oriental enemy was an anxious and defensive response to the specific cultural and political initiatives of anti-colonialist Muslims he encountered in the first years of the twentieth century. Bertrand had reconverted to a neo-traditionalist Catholicism in response to fears about migrant Muslim workers in Marseilles, Islamic reformism, as well as his anxieties about Arab and Turkish nationalist movements in the eastern Mediterranean. Likewise, his writings on Germans changed over time too, and in many ways their image took inspiration from his writings on Muslims—one of France’s oldest rivalries translated through the prism of colonialism. Just as Bertrand’s model for his writings on France’s southern bastion against barbarism—in other words Algeria—were in part inspired by Barrès’s writings on the eastern bastion against Germany, when it came time for Bertrand to write on Germany, he would translate his writings about the Muslim enemy back onto the German one.

**German Barbarism, Latin Truths**

So far we have discussed some of the colonial context leading to his later writings on Germany: how he believed it was through a necessary process of mimicry of the enemy barbarian—a process of rebarbarization—that French
civilization would survive in the face of Muslim regeneration. When writing about Germans and Germany, he adapted his notion of rebarbarization to the enemy he had known as a youth in Lorraine.

During the Great War, a number of French intellectuals advanced a thesis that a Pan-Latin bloc was needed to be formed against Pan-German barbarism. Alphonse Roche and Martha Hanna observe that Louis Bertrand was the most notable example of this phenomenon. But other intellectuals also mobilized themselves to fashion the fantasy of a trans-national Latin cultural bloc against Germany. Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses points to Paul Adam’s ‘mental gymnastics’ in teasing out a narrative of Latinité vs. Pan-Germanism from the complex alliances of the First World War:

Lusitania was retaking its place beneath the emblems of the Legions, along with the Italians and the Gallic-Romans, with the Byzantines of Russia, with an England modified by the Normans, who brought to Oxford and Cambridge the words and habits of our Latin Pátria... If creativity was a sign of Latin genius, these writers exhibited it well in their strained configurations of a Latin race that would include Anglo-Saxons and Slavs. But this was not entirely a case of French Pan-Latinism being painted over other countries’ intellectuals’ own propaganda efforts. French Pan-Latinism often operated in sympathy with the Greco-Roman pretensions of Portuguese and

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38 See Martha Hanna, The Mobilization of Intellect (Harvard University Press, 1996); Roche, Provençal Regionalism.

other state intellectuals. Bertrand was proud that his calls for a Latin bloc against foreign barbarism had, with World War I, achieved a hegemony over the works of mobilized French intellectuals. Presentations were made at the Sorbonne, and manifestos written on behalf of the French Academies. A series of books titled "L’Effort de la France et de ses alliés" produced by La Revue Historique (founded by Gabriel Monod) gathered intellectuals during the war, including Paul Adam and Augustin Bernard. These works celebrated the allied countries and regions in their Latin determination for liberty and individualism against German savagery. In the midst of the mystical Union Sacrée, the ‘right-wing’ Action Française’s calls for Latin individualism and the ‘left-wing’ Ligue des Droits de l’homme’s calls for French liberty dovetailed into a relatively seamless and surprisingly narrow spectrum of French political parti-pris against a barbarous Germany. Many intellectuals, even briefly André Gide, were drawn to the Action Française as the principal defender of the French nation against German barbarism.

Although Bertrand’s theories of his colonial mimicry, or rebarbarization, were manifest already in his dissertation—and as Lorcin points out, discussed in his novel Le Rival de Don Juan—they were most fully developed in a 1915 essay which his biographer Maurice Ricord calls his most important work for

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40 In her groundbreaking study of French scholars mobilizing their works during the Great War, or rather, mobilizing in reaction to Poincaré’s appeal that members of the Académie Française and other scholars contribute to the war effort, Martha Hanna devotes a chapter to the classicist revival of the Great War among Republican scholars. Interestingly, she devotes a section to Louis Bertrand’s speech on his proposed Union Latine in 1916 unproblematically alongside Republican scholars of the Sorbonne. What is interesting here is that the difference between Republican liberty and Latin individuality, in the midst of the war, could be so easily conflated. Hanna, Mobilization of the Intellect, pp. 142-176.
understanding his entire oeuvre. It was an essay entitled, in the midst of the war against Germany, “Nietzsche et la Méditerrannée.”

It is an improbable essay. During a war in which Pan-Latinism was a rallying cry against a feared Pan-Germanism, with no more vocal a champion than Bertrand, he argues in the conservative Revue des Deux Mondes that Friedrich Nietzsche, once heralded by Symbolist and Action Française classicist alike, holds the key to solving the riddle not only of German barbarism, but of Latin civilization, and thus his own work. If Nietzsche made such an impact on him, this was a curious time to acknowledge it. After all, this was a period in which Nietzsche’s work was set up by mobilized intellectuals as a symptom of German barbarism and aggression. Bertrand argues that it was important to understand Nietzsche in order to better understand their opponent. It is possible that, as he avows in the essay, he had never read Nietzsche until the war as an act of surveillance of the enemy, and was thus shocked to discover this German philosopher held such wisdom. But this means taking his argument that he only read Nietzsche to research the barbarism of the enemy’s spirit at face value.

The importance of Nietzsche to Bertrand’s work is evident through to his last writings in Crépuscule, in which Bertrand remained opposed to the “herd mentality” of the masses. But when did Bertrand begin reading Nietzsche? As in his essay, he argued in private correspondence that it was only during the war

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that he picked up this work, and thus the similarities were shocking to him. He acknowledged in a letter that Gasquet had in fact given him Nietzsche’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra* while Bertrand was in Montpellier many years earlier—which would have placed it in the first few years of the twentieth century. But he told Gasquet that he had never read that work, or Nietzsche generally, and it was only the war that forced him to read this German, as a form of cultural reconnaissance. And yet here he found a kindred spirit in the image of the barbarous enemy. He wrote to Gasquet

> Is it surprising that I have been as misunderstood as Nietzsche? To rebarbarize oneself in order to resist the barbarians, to consider new lands, the colonial milieu, as the real professor of energy that will refashion the race, this is the best of Nietzsche’s teachings. And this is what I have written in my African novels, with a sense of Latin measure in its effect, well before knowing him. It has been said that I was writing exoticism or a colonial novel. Sheer Stupidity!  

It is indeed impossible to precisely date the time Bertrand began reading Nietzsche, but it was almost certainly many years earlier than he claimed. Nietzsche’s early work was iconic for Symbolists, just as his later work was iconic for neo-traditionalists. Bertrand had actually cited passages from *Also Sprach Zarathustra* in his 1906 novel *L’Invasion*, and had cited Nietzsche, in a more defensive tone, in his 1903 essay *La Renaissance classique*. Whether he forgot this, or hoped that Gasquet at least had, is difficult to tell. It is possible he gathered

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this material from Nietzsche from a third mediated source, and not from the copy Gasquet had gifted him. Certainly Nietzsche appears repeatedly through avant-garde journals of the 1890s. And certainly many of his contemporaries, including Barrès, were to some degree advancing Nietzsche’s arguments already in mediated form. Barrès had in fact argued that Nietzsche was all one needed to know about modernity. But it is also difficult to believe that this classicist Bertrand, who was so widely read in classical sources, had not read Nietzsche’s works, especially *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, considering how similar many of their conclusions were. In any case, there are repeated examples of *Verneinung* in his writings, as he begins to claim Nietzsche as an inspirer of his works, then disavows it.

But there is a more significant point than to locate when Bertrand read Nietzsche, and how much his work owed to the latter: that is, why acknowledge such an affinity at this point, in the midst of war? Nietzsche is chosen here, in the midst of a war pitting Pan-Latinism against Pan-Germanism, as writing in the same spirit as Bertrand. The latter identified *Le Sang des Races* as being written in the same spirit as Nietzsche’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, although he likely meant this to suggest affinities between their works rather than any direct inspiration.45 This was a period in which anti-German hysteria was at a fever pitch in French

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universities and academies, a hysteria aided by Bertrand’s own xenophobic writings and public lectures.\textsuperscript{46}

Based on the way he presents Nietzsche as a barbarous model to follow, there is something deeper occurring here, that reveals much about how Bertrand’s xenophobia operated. This was a constitutive xenophobia in which choosing to acknowledge a deep affinity with a German’s thought was a way of attacking German thought—once again by the process of \textit{rebarbarization}. His use of Nietzsche here is operating on many levels simultaneously. Bertrand was positioning his own thought, his own methods, and this very writing about Nietzsche, as an example of his own thesis about rebarbarization. This was a French writer who argued that French people needed to rebarbarize themselves by mimicking the enemy in order to unleash the barbarous vitality of an original conquering Latin spirit. His twinning himself with Nietzsche, while remaining more forcefully French, proves his own possession of a Latin vitalism—and his own theories of rebarbarization in mimicry of the enemy other. And the fact that it was a foreign Symbolist icon that he marshaled into service for his vitalist nationalism is also significant, given his classicist aesthetic theories.

In his essay, Bertrand condemns the madness of Germany, the madness of Nietzsche, and the madness of German idealism generally (conveniently forgetting in the midst of war propaganda his own avowed intellectual debt to

\textsuperscript{46} See Hanna, \textit{The Mobilization of Intellect}, \textit{passim}.  

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Schopenhauer and French Symbolism). But for Bertrand, there remains in Nietzsche an appeal to force that must not be ignored in the midst of this war. Nietzsche displayed all the faults of his race, and it was, literally, “torture for a French mind, following him, to rethink his ideas under the form and order he imposed on them.” However, Bertrand was fascinated by Nietzsche’s classicism and his love of the Mediterranean, even though Nietzsche had translated its lessons into barbarous German ones. Nietzsche’s work, though profoundly German, bore the influence of the Mediterranean. For Bertrand, there were lessons to be learned about the Mediterranean and Greco-Latin culture by reading Nietzsche, just as in his earlier work, *La Grèce du soleil et des paysages*, he had argued there were important lessons about the Mediterranean and classical Greco-Latin culture to be learned in the quotidian practices of contemporary Muslims.\(^4^7\) In each case, the Greco-Latin root of French civilization was best found in the image of the contemporary barbarian.

Nietzsche, despite his love of the ancient Greeks, lacked the capacity for what was natural for the French—the sentiment of measure. For “Nietzsche already exceeded the Germans of his time, his was an unrestrained Asiatic mentality. But it must be said that since then, the Pan-Germans have caught up to him. Inside of all Germans, there is an Asiatic who sleeps.” Bertrand continues that after having spent so much time confronting the true Oriental, he “suspected

\(^4^7\) Louis Bertrand, *La Grèce du soleil et des paysages* (Paris; Fasquelle, 1908).
the German of being a grotesque Oriental.” And yet Nietzsche must be read, for despite embodying the worst of German (and ‘Oriental’) traits, “never has there been a greater need for a force to defend our right, and never has the need to be strong been shown to be more important.” Thus, despite Nietzsche’s barbarism, the French need to read him as an educator in order to grow in strength. Here Bertrand identifies strongly with Nietzsche, in his role as a promethean educator of the people. Nietzsche is “an educator, an educator of peoples—and it is from the ancient Mediterranean lands that he has drawn the principles of his heroic pedagogy.”

And at this point in an essay about Nietzschean philosophy and German aggression, Bertrand suddenly summarizes his own philosophy and work, his view of the colonial Mediterranean, and the need for Latins to rebarbarize themselves. It is worth quoting from some of it. He states that he chose to base his writings in Algeria because there the meeting and concurrence of different peoples “stimulates one’s energies, where already is forming a race of masters, in the face of a race of madmen, masters who nonetheless maintain with a somber obstinacy the integrity of their character.” He continues,

without constant contact with the barbarian, the civilized become soft by a sense of well-being, over refined by a moral and intellectual culture that neglects reality. There in the colony he senses the necessity to rebarbarize oneself to adapt to a new milieu. There he regains his sense of the enemy, which an always precarious sense of security had made him lose. However, despite his acquired hardiness, the settler is

never, nor must ever be, a barbarian. On the contrary, in the face of barbarism, the settler feels himself to be the envoy of civilization, of which he is proud.\textsuperscript{49}

In other words, the individualist Latin sense of measure, impossible for Germans and indigenous Algerians to understand but in parodic mimicry, means that the Latin can never actually become a barbarian; but in order not to lose one’s sense of civilization, as had been the case in metropolitan France, the Latin must be in constant contact with an Orientalized enemy.\textsuperscript{50}

\subsection*{From a Colonial Master Race to a New Race of Fascists}

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 182.
\textsuperscript{50} It is fitting that Maurice Ricord would dub this work the key to understanding Bertrand’s entire oeuvre for more reasons than those listed. For the generation of 1890s intellectuals, at least as interviewed by Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde (writing under the collective ‘Agathon’) Nietzsche was one of the most important figures to help revitalize a generation that had lost its vitality. But they argued that the generation in 1912 was no longer in need of such works. For Hugues Rebell, “The Slav and the German that exist in him is often shocking, but as an excellent Hellenist, and a spirit fed by eighteenth-century French philosophy, Nietzsche is nothing less than a writer who must be revealed to France—in contrast to Tolstoy or Ibsen.” As quoted in Reino Virtanen, “Nietzsche and the Action Française,” \textit{Journal of the History of Ideas}, vol. 11, no. 2 (Apr., 1950), p. 195. Nietzsche is again and again presented as a Gnostic antidote: a poison that cures. Nietzsche was an “antidote” to the generation of the 1890s supposedly ‘overwhelmed’ by Slavic and German ‘contagion’: André Hallays argued in 1895 that Nietzsche had followers “among the youth fed up with democracy and to whom he preached pride and paganism.” “Nietzsche and the Action Française,” p. 195. It would be simpler to provide a list of avant-garde writers not immersed in the debates about Nietzsche in the 1890s than those who were: Léon Daudet, Barrès, Jacques Bainville, Paul Adam were only some of the many who owed Nietzsche some of their ideas—notably absent among classicists was the only xenophobe consistent in his hatreds, Maurras. There are any number of ways Nietzsche can be read, of course. He has even been appropriated by feminist writers. Sometimes it seems anything is possible. But in the historical context of 1890s French intellectual circles, Nietzsche was very easily, and unsurprisingly, assimilated by anti-democrats, anti-socialists, xenophobes and neo-traditional classicists. Besides Maurras, it is hard to find a neo-traditionalist who did not appreciate Nietzsche in some way or another, at least at some points in their careers. René Wellek points out that in Pierre Lassere’s \textit{La Morale de Nietzsche}, Nietzsche “is exalted as the crown witness against Romanticism: Romantic art is the expression of the slave mind, Rousseau is its progenitor, while classicism, (that of Goethe and the French) is the antidote to anarchy and decadence.” René Wellek, “French ‘Classical Criticism’ in the Twentieth Century,” \textit{Yale French Studies}, No. 38, The Classical Line: Essays in Honor of Henri Peyre (1967), p. 55.
How did Bertrand’s strange orientalizing Germanophobia of World War I become his strange Germanophilia of the 1930s? Bertrand had twinned a savage Muslim enemy to his prescriptions for a regenerate, re barbarized French identity forged in the violence of the colony. But this enemy image of a monolithic Islam shifted from one of decadence to insurgency as Bertrand became more aware of Egyptian and Turkish nationalism and especially Islamic modernism. Of course one can no more reduce specific Arab and Turkish national movements or the Nahda to a colonial context than French society and culture in this period. And yet each was fundamentally refashioned and adapted to the specific and quotidian realities of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century colonialism, and was influential across national boundaries. Egyptian and Turkish nationalist movements would have profound influences on Algerian nationalists and religious reformers. As anti-German hysteria increased in the writings of intellectuals leading up to and during the Great War, Bertrand had shifted his gaze to another enemy, and thus another opportunity for French regeneration in opposition to, and in mimicry of, a foreign and orientalized barbarism, as the Manichean violence of the colony was finally visited upon the fields of northeastern France. Bertrand’s enemy images of German and Muslim bled the one into the other. The Muslims were at the Southern Bastion of France, Algeria – just as Germans were at the Eastern Bastion, Lorraine. And German thought like that of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche was essentially ‘Oriental’ in its
foreignness. Images of Muslim and German were most relevant in their utility as barbarous spectacles against which a more virile French identity could be produced and policed.

But another longstanding thread in his writing was his profound anxiety regarding worker militancy and class division in France. This was, after all, a major component of his initial novel, of workers regenerated, and identifying themselves according to the blood of their race, rather than the toil of their class. And it was among Marseillais workers that his initial fears of a resurgent Islam manifested, and which led to his odyssey across the Eastern Mediterranean. His position regarding the need for Latin races in Algeria and France changed depending on what he thought were France’s geopolitical interests. Likewise, his view of Germany shifted in the inter-war period, from one that was profoundly hostile, to one which saw in Germany’s national revolution the potential source of opposition to Communism and worker militancy. For an intellectual famous for producing essentialized images of enemy barbarism, nothing was ever so essential as serving the immediate interests of his sense of his own race, gender and class. So it is worth examining his rapprochement to Nazism and his opposition to Communism in this period. Here again, just as we saw in his writings during the Great War, the specter of a strangely Orientalized enemy against which France needed to rebarbarize itself was how he conceived this other enemy to civilization— that of the Communist infiltrator.
Many intellectuals in the inter-war period searched for a ‘Third Way’ between the supposed degeneracy of liberalism and savagery of Communism. These searches for a Third Way manifested themselves in a number of different political and cultural positions, ranging from quietism, Emmanuel Mounier’s Personalism, to fascism. And for Bertrand, already obsessed with elaborating a program for national regeneration that would transcend class in a Manichean racial struggle against a savage enemy, fascism held an important attraction, even as he voiced doubts that the French could be, by virtue of their race, their Latin individualism, actually fascist. Instead, they would mimic its lessons to the letter, while retaining their Latin spirit, in order to defeat the Communist enemy to civilization. Increasingly concerned with Communism and the radicalization of worker and migrant populations in France, and still the champion of his “master race” of settlers, Bertrand was involved in a number of far-right organizations and projects, that would eventually lead to his participation in the Comité France-Allemagne, with Georges Scapini and Fernand de Brinon, fellow académiciens Jules Romains and Pierre Benoit, as well as Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, Bertrand de Jouvenel, among others. Yet even in his hagiography of Adolph Hitler he denied he was fascist. The enemies of the previous war were now potential allies in a coming war for Western civilization itself. For Bertrand, Communism was pathology. It was a contagion infecting colonized people and had to be eradicated along with anti-colonial nationalism. According to Bertrand,
the two co-mingled in vague ways across continents, in a seemingly single movement of destructive violence against ‘the West’—an anti-Western violence manifest in part by the upsetting accusation that ‘the West’ was imperialist:

At this very moment, from China to Morocco—by way of India, Turkey and Soviet Russia—we see the springing forth of all the old oriental barbarisms, under the flag of communism or nationalism. The plot is to destroy the great hegemonic nations of the West, those who police the world, in arousing one against the other, in accusing them of imperialism, in ruining their military spirit, that is to say their instinct for self-preservation.51

In reality, the relationship between specific Communist and anti-colonial organizations in colonies and the above-mentioned states was much more complex, varied, and often oppositional.52 If Communism was a threat to ‘the

51 Bertrand, Devant l’Islam 69
52 And between anti-colonial organizations themselves, like the Association of Ulemas in the later 1930s and the Parti du Peuple Algérien, or later between the Front de Libération National and the Mouvement National Algérien. On the conflicts within and between anti-colonial organizations in Algeria, Mohammed Harbi’s Le FLN, mirage et réalité remains a classic in the field. Marxist organizations were influential for Algerian migrants in France, whose experiences and organization were a crucial component in the elaboration of Algerian nationalism. Kamel Bougessa argues that the members of the initial Algerian independence party borrowed the organizational structure and revolutionary ideology from their experiences in the Parti Communiste Français. See Bougessa, Aux sources du nationalisme algérien: Les pionniers du populisme. However, Marxist class-consciousness among nationalists in Algeria was according to Omar Carlier “practically nil.” Instead, especially during the inter-war period, a social consciousness was forming, especially among lower-middle class Muslims, where the Parti du Peuple Algérien found its principal support. This social consciousness was, broadly speaking, much more complex than that between urban and rural, and divided society along several overlapping lines: between ‘amma (plebian) and khassa (elite), ‘the bourgeoisie’ and ‘the people’, foreigner and the ummah, invader and dominated. Carlier, Entre nation et jihad, pp. 38, 222-3. The religious confraternities (the most famous of which the Qadiriya of Cheikh Abd el Qadir), which had been principal sites of organizational resistance to the French invasion and occupation, were gradually over the late nineteenth and early twentieth century implicated in the complex relationships of colonial administration. Though this collaboration was quite often discordant, it was nonetheless an essential feature of colonial administration, and by the early twentieth century, the maraboutic caïdat was increasingly working with the interests of the administration. Carlier, Entre nation et jihad, p. 41; Gilbert Meynier, l’Algérie révélée, 1982. It was at this time that religious reformism was gaining ground and followers in Algeria—by the 1920s the Association of Ulemas was coalescing around the figures of Bachir Ibrahimi, Abd el Qadir Ibn Badis, and
West’ adopted by colonized peoples (an impression that for instance ignored years of collaboration by the PCF in the colonial administration of Algeria, and the relatively marginal position of Communist parties in Algeria), Communism in France was at the same time itself Orientalized:

The nightmare of invasion haunts me. Even in France, I am once again obsessed in returning to a Paris invaded by cosmopolitan scum, left to the agitators and traitors of Moscow—dishonoured in its very heart, in what is the most exquisitely elegant and French, by the exhibition of a crude and funereal ugliness—a pot-pourri of all the ancient and modern Orients and is a blow against all the traditions of our art.53

After his journeys to Egypt, it was a different Paris that appeared under Bertrand’s eyes in the inter-war period, certainly different than the one he saw as a self-identified cosmopolitan barbarian at the turn of century. No longer a Symbolist aesthete, now a conservative Catholic and Royalist, he joined in organizations attempting to save civilization from barbarous masses within and without France.54 It is worth examining his political and cultural activism in this

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53 A similar approach in exoticizing Communism as ‘Oriental’ can be found in Henri Massis’ *La Défense de l’Occident* (1927).
54 Bertrand was a signatory to many of the most important neo-traditionalist manifestos of the inter-war period—many written by Henri Massis. He signed the Maurrasian *Pour un parti de l’intelligence* manifesto published in *Le Figaro* in July 19, 1919. It was a snapshot of many of the far-right intellectuals of the period (and particularly intellectuals gravitating by this time towards, if not into, the Action Française), although Barrès did not sign it. Its signatories included Massis, Maurice Denis, Jacques Bainville, Georges Valois, Paul Bourget, Joachim Gasquet, Edmond Jaloux, Camille Mauclair, Jacques Maritain, and Nouvelle Revue Française co-founder Henri
period. He belonged to several counter-revolutionary organizations such as the 
Cercle de Fustel de Coulanges. But his accounts of his travels in this period,
including to occupied Libya, Britain, Germany and Québec are perhaps the most
illuminating as to how he continued to use a colonial lens to understand France’s
seemingly endless decadent present and its ever deferred regenerative future.

Against the threats of external invasion, spectacular or otherwise, and
fears of internal cabals of Freemasons, Jews, Communists, workers, Muslims,
immigrants and others in France, he helped organize the right-wing Cercle du
Fustel de Coulanges that propagandized against a degenerate republican
pedagogy. Bertrand delivered its inaugural address, after Maurras, who was
originally scheduled, could not attend.55 The Cercle Fustel de Coulanges was
what today would be called a think tank, one of many intellectuals circles that
were organized in the inter war period, and which were crucial to establishing a
ready-made ideological framework for the Vichy state upon its foundation.56

Ghéon, among others. According to Eugen Weber, Jacques Rivière saw that behind this
manifesto, “camouflaged by circumstance, was the eternal Action Française.” Weber, Action
Française 549n. Bertrand would later sign Maurras’ 1935 manifesto Pour la défense de l’Occident et la
paix en Europe, which was signed by Bertrand, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, Mgr Baudrillart, Abel
Bonnard, Pierre Gaxotte, Mauhier, Robert Brasillach. The manifesto of 1935 was explicitly pro-
colonial, and in defense of Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia. The signatories challenged the threats of
sanctions that might provoke a war, and that rested on putting “on equal footing the superior and
inferior, the civilized and the barbarian.” The manifesto was published in Le Temps, October, 4,
1935. These were positions that mirrored the Action Française’s evolution to a more explicit pro-
colonial position, and also mirrored Bertrand’s increasingly sympathetic position regarding
fascist nationalism.

55 See Cahiers du Cercle Fustel de Coulanges, no. 1, 1928.
56 Jean-Michel Barreau, “Les ‘nationaux’ et l’école dans l’entre-deux-guerres,” in Quasimodo, no 3-
Jean-Michel Barreau argues that the Cercle Fustel de Coulanges was a striking example of this phenomenon, of which Bertrand was one of the four initial signatories, along with Maurras, constitutional scholar Charles Benoist and scientist and physician Louis Dunoyer—one might imagine Dunoyer at these meetings alongside Maurras, living down the fact that he was a direct descendent of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. They would be joined by Bertrand’s old lycée classmate André Bellessort, as well as the generals Maxime Weygand and the colonial far-right icon Hubert Lyautey—Lyautey was later a spokesperson for the only, if however disorganized, far-right attempt in 1934 to topple the Republic by force. And there were many others. Although the Cercle Proudhon (in that it provides a striking example of far left and far right intellectuals meeting together) has received much attention since Zeev Sternhell’s thesis in *Ni droite ni gauche*, other organizations that provided intellectual programs to be developed to counter republican institutions have not. As with the Cercle Proudhon, and the much more successful and influential Fédération Régionaliste Française, behind the Cercle Fustel de Coulanges lay the clever tactician and theoretician of the far-right, Charles Maurras.57 Maurras’s venom for his political and aesthetic enemies can easily overshadow how successful he in fact was at reaching out to liberals,

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57 Sorel’s ideological importance to the Cercle Proudhon has been rightfully noted by a number of historians of fascism, but Maurras’s ideological importance in this group is often treated as secondary. Yet it was Maurras who presided over the first meeting of the Cercle Proudhon—in his later life Sorel drew much closer to Maurras’s authoritarian monarchism than Maurras did to Sorel’s syndicalism. See Sternhell, *Ni Droite ni gauche*, passim; Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism*; Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Republic: Sorel, Barrès and Maurras*, p. 48.
conservatives, socialists and anarchists in finding common cause or affinity on specific issues, whether those be regionalism and decentralization, anti-republicanism or conservative pedagogy. Throughout his career Maurras organized think tanks that also functioned as affinity groups, with members of divergent tendencies allied on a specific concrete issue or project. There has been considerable attention placed on the idiosyncratic and short-lived Cercle Proudhon—Sternhell has, controversially, gone so far as to locate it as the source of Italian Fascist ideology. And yet other Maurrasian affinity groups had a much more lasting and widespread effect on French politics and culture. One of Maurras’s most neglected affinity groups was an alliance of various conservative and far-right intellectuals around issues of establishing a counter-republican pedagogy, fittingly titled the Cercle Fustel de Coulanges. The activists of the Cercle Fustel de Coulanges saw republican pedagogy as dominated by Communists advancing a “revolutionary spirit,” and preying upon the minds of French children. For these intellectuals, the revolution was over and should be dead and buried. This concern with providing an alternative pedagogy to the rotting core of French education run by covert radicals was not one fashioned by Maurras alone however, and it had been a preoccupation for Bertrand throughout his life. In a short written meditation entitled “En finir avec le culte de la Révolution pour elle même,” Bertrand, like other Maurrasian neo-traditionalists, railed against the legacy of the French Revolution—not the French Revolution as
an historical event, but “the superstition of the revolutionary spirit,” that infected French politics and distorted French history. This was a superstition particularly “strong among the Jews.” The Revolution was an aestheticization of violence with its “mysticism of torture and assassination.” It even infested the Pantheon with the sculptures of “cannibals,” or revolutionary leaders (as an integral nationalist he exotically described class conflict as national cannibalism).[58]

Dreyfusard Bertrand’s anti-Semitic stereotypes had proliferated alongside Greek and other stereotypes through his early novels, but it was in his later works, especially with his rapprochement with Nazism, that he took a more explicit anti-Semitic political position. By the 1930s he had long abandoned his fin-de-siècle criticisms of the anti-Semitism of Drumont, Barrès and Maurras to embrace anti-Semitism as a political rallying cry for the far-right.[59]

One of the most successful attempts to provide an alternative pedagogy in France was in the series of popular histories written by Action Française sympathizers like Jacques Bainville and Bertrand, of which Bertrand’s Louis XIV was the first in the series—and Maurras would later claim had helped resuscitate twentieth-century interest in the Sun King.[60] These popular Royalist histories

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[58] Louis Bertrand, Le Livre de consolation (Fayard, 1945), p. 79; Along with a celebration of imperialism, the fear of Bolshevism is a preoccupation which defined transnational fascist fellowship in the inter-war period. See for example the proceedings of the second Nationalist International, including a speech by Bertrand, in Hans K.E.L. Keller (ed), L’internationale — ennemie des nations (1936).

[59] As noted in chapter three, in his earlier letters and essays Dreyfusard Bertrand criticized the anti-Semitism of Drumont, Barrès, Maurras and Lyautey.

were to act as a counter-measure to what they saw as the republican pedagogy of the schools. In a time that can too easily be retroactively imagined as the period in French historiography in which the Annales school came to prominence, by far the most widely-read and influential histories were produced by far-right historians. As William R. Keylor argues, these histories were not only widely-read, but were influential upon French historical writing generally, making it much more accessible if not always accurate. *Louis XIV* went through over one hundred reprintings alone. Louis XIV was, as in Bainville’s portrait, a model dictator. Bertrand’s later hagiography of Hitler would betray more than a passing resemblance to his examination of the greatest French monarch. Though these histories shared an obvious motivation in retroactively constructing monarchist and far-right narratives as the essential histories of France, these works were nonetheless quite sophisticated as well as being written for widespread appeal. Bertrand’s histories were spare in their use of evidence, and unsurprisingly much more focused on emotional affect than Bainville. Bainville, who was also author of the still famous analysis of the Versailles Treaty *Les conséquences politiques de la paix*, was by far the more analytic historian. Even today, in *From Liberalism to Fascism*, Kevin Passmore acknowledges the lasting value of Bainville’s analysis, in his portrait of inter-war French conservatism as an essentially fractured set of

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61 For a discussion on this Royalist historiography and its impact on French culture, see William R. Keylor, *Jacques Bainville and the Renaissance of Royalist History*; see also Stephen Wilson, “History and Traditionalism: Maurras and the Action Française.”
groups aligned only on certain evolving issues—a portrait which captures something of Bertrand’s individual trajectory in France as well.62

In the 1930s, Bertrand toured a number of states and attended various meetings and conferences. Many of these states and organizations were fascist, and his glowing impressions of them were publicized in essays and books for a French audience. His election to Barrès’ chair at the Académie Française, the most august French cultural institution, in 1925 aided his efforts in propagandizing his particular French fascism. He approvingly toured fascist-occupied Libya in 1934, only a few years after the entire population of Cyrenaic Bedouins had been interred in deadly colonial concentration camps, decimating the population in the camps by as much as half or even more, while resistance leader Omar Mukhtar was executed.63 It is remarkable how still today the crimes of Italian Fascism can be presented as essentially ‘non-violent’ as compared to Nazism—by rigidly obeying the colonial quarantine of dehumanization, and not following its crimes to Africa—ones that there appear suddenly less remarkable in comparison with other European colonial states. Bertrand would present the colonial struggle for a Fascist Italian Libya as one of Christian “sacrifice” for the indigenous, rather than the sacrifice of the indigenous to colonial rule as was the actuality in this case. In

62 Bainville’s diagnosis of the French right, as adapted by Passmore, has interesting parallels with the highly influential 1942 analysis of the Nazi party, Franz Neumann’s Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism. Neumann argued that the Nazi party itself, even in power, was a shifting and competing alliance of different right-wing factions and interests often only unified in opposition to radical German workers’ movements. See Neumann, Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism (Oxford University Press, 1942).

63 Bertrand, Vers Cyrène, Terre d’Apollon (Fayard, 1935).
the context of these events, the conclusion was typically hallucinatory in its celebration of colonial struggle:

Civilization must prove its superiority by its charity. We must not limit ourselves to only keeping the barbarian from causing harm to others and himself. We must also alleviate his destitution. We can only justify our presence on this enemy land by doing good.

It is what Rome did, up until the day that it lost, along with its power, an awareness of its mission. But here it has returned, in one of the great provinces of Latinité. We who are with the upholders of the Empire, we can only joyfully welcome the return of the Legions and Eagles here.⁶⁴

Bertrand’s Christian-infused neo-traditionalism skillfully blended notions of (or lip service to) charity, piety, humanism, and the notion of the colonial “mise en valeur” to argue that the Italian presence in North Africa was a fraternal project of a fellow Latin country, which like the work of the French, was one of thankless sacrifice and responsibility to oversee and ameliorate a people culturally incapable of bettering themselves. But if sacrifices had to be made, whether by concentration camp or massacre, Bertrand was first to argue for them.

Bertrand was a mainstay of conservative and fascist cultural and intellectual meetings throughout the 1930s, including his attending of the Second Volta Conference as well as giving the inaugural address for the Cercle Fustel de Coulanges. He even delivered a lecture at the improbably named “Nationalist International” of fascist intellectuals in London in 1935. At this fairly marginal and obscure meeting (unsurprisingly fascists from opposing countries did not

tend to play well together) Bertrand hoped that, like organizer Hans Keller, fascists could put aside their differences after the Great War to focus on the civilizational enemy of international Bolshevism. In his speech to the Nationalist International, he argued that an internationalism of nationalists must oppose itself to “all those who aim to destroy nationalities.” A cure must be found against an internationalism that he refers to as plague decimating European civilization. Against international Communism he proposes a different sort of transnational solidarity. He bases it on the mutual recognition of that which is foreign in other nationalities, and the judicious borrowing of foreign influence between nations in order to strengthen them. Here again, he cites Nietzsche as a source of this idea. Here again he uses Nietzsche as his foreign double, as an illustration of his call for the need to mimic foreign influence among this fraternal gathering to revivify one’s strength sapped by decadence and conspiracy. And here again, his method of colonial mimicry of the foreign barbarian is central to his argument. This “method” of foreign recognition and borrowings would oppose itself to the barbarism of Communism. His speech concludes:

There is a saying of Nietzsche’s that I am pleased to cite and that seems to me very wise. Because within a most intransigent nationalism, he knows to give his share to internationalism. His saying is this: ‘the best way to be German, is to acquire the qualities that the Germans are missing.’ I believe we can all rally around this idea for the greater good of our fatherlands.

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66 L’Internationalisme – ennemie des nations; he again refers to internationalism as ‘the plague’ in his essay “Comment résister?” Bertrand, Le Livre de consolation, p. 81.
Bertrand was even a dignitary for a week of ceremonies at the 1936 Nuremberg Rallies, and most difficult for apologists after the war, wrote a hagiography of Hitler. At Nuremberg, Bertrand was “astounded by the beauty of such a spectacle. We said to ourselves, ‘why do we not see anything similar at home?’... Those multitudes, that discipline, and above all that unanimity that gives one the idea of an invincible force!”\(^6^8\) For Bertrand, his view of Nazi Germany was, like so many French fascists, ambivalent due to his own particular nationalist credo. For Bertrand, Hitler’s leadership qualities suggested affinities with Latin ones; he even compared Hitler to Louis XIV. However the inherent French quality of Latin individualism, a cultural referent more or less sacred to French integral nationalists, meant that Hitlerism was not viable in its German formulation for a France that neo-traditionalists wedded not only to strong monarchs but, sometimes conflictingly, to aristocratic values of individuality and (non-democratic) liberty: “It is incontestable that the totalitarian state to which Hitlerism seems to lean is as opposed as possible to French and Latin individualism.”\(^6^9\) Unlike the integral xenophobia of Maurras, Bertrand felt that

\(^6^9\) Bertrand, *Hitler*, p. 96 It might seem self-evident that someone who would ‘develop’ into a fascist, like Bertrand, repudiated by his sometimes ally Charles Maurras, would of course stand against individualism, and yet such an assumption distorts both the complexities of those who advocated fascism, as well as the permeability of ahistorically isolated categories of anarchism, liberalism, fascism and socialism, at least among intellectuals, which are often read backwards through the frozen categories of the Cold War. Divested of the social specificities in which such political identities were proclaimed, the grouping of intellectuals in these categories can obscure as much it reveals. The examples of Gabriele d’Annunzio, Drieu la Rochelle, and of course Maurice Barrès prove that such distinctions, between an aesthetic individualism and ultra-right
Hitlerism was not counter to a Catholic conscience, though he maintained that, “a French hitlerian seems an absurdity to me.” And yet his association with Nazism was so striking to his contemporaries that one of the things François Mauriac remembered most about Bertrand, was his joyfully greeting his fellow French Académiciens with what is now retroactively called the Hitler salute. Bertrand interpreted Hitler’s reformation through the eyes of an Ultramontaine integral nationalist, even as he adapted his neo-traditionalist ideas to Hitlerism: “For Hitler, it was necessary to remake the nation from top to bottom. It is not only the ‘intellectual and moral reform’ that Renan called for right after our disasters; it is also social and political reform, total reform, that is, in reality, a great national revolution.”

Although many contemporaries, like Paul Valéry, approved of Salazar, and only slightly fewer of Mussolini, Hitler was still a German as Maurras pointed out—the always consistent xenophobe Maurras himself believed that Hitler’s measures drew Nazism, in its foreignness to French thought, closer to the barbarous fanaticism of Islam, Maurras as usual betraying the importance of the politics were less firm—indeed, a bohemian individualism was the avenue through which many of these intellectuals came to celebrate a politics of ‘national energy’. (See Jerrold Seigel’s nuanced discussion of Barrès in his Bohemian Paris). Although some scholars, following Zeev Sternhell, have argued that a volatile admixture of socialism and nationalism were equally influential to these ‘proto-fascist’ thinkers, so too was an uncompromising individualism, both aesthetic and political, that is perhaps less palatable to read retroactively in someone like Barrès, who was a leading propagandist of French ultra-nationalism and anti-Semitism, or Bertrand, arguably as far-right in his political commitments as any French intellectual in the inter-war period.

70 Bertrand, Hitler, p. 41.
72 Bertrand, Hitler, p. 86.
“oriental” as opposite everything dear to France. Still, as late as 1939, Bertrand would write to Catholic conservative Robert d’Harcourt (whose sons nonetheless would later end up at Buchenwald): “Hitler is our only salvation against the bolsheviks and the communists.”  

For Maurras, Hitler was a German and thus barbarian and enemy, point final. For Bertrand, Hitler’s barbarism was one that could save civilization from the true barbarians that had plagued him from his earliest writings. In an era of radicals, migrants and anti-colonialists, Hitler was one of the few bulwarks against the rising tide of barbarism threatening Western Civilization itself.

His propagandizing for fascism and Nazism, and his opposition to Communism, drew again upon his earlier writings on rebarbarization. As Bertrand grew ever closer to Nazism in the inter-war period, he argued, again, that the barbarous tactics of the enemy, here international Communism, needed to be mimicked in order to defeat it. Already in 1930, in an essay entitled “Comment résister”, he argued that the contagion and contamination of international Communism must be fought by adapting to, by assimilating to, the image of the enemy and then unleashing its revivifying power upon the body politic:

Secret societies proliferate from one corner to the other of our poor country. We can only defeat them with their own weapons: infiltration, the creation of cells, and the enlistment of all the savior forces of the nation. Stand a group of national salvation

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against each revolutionary group. Have our people occupy the positions of command. Counteract the work of each suspect official with their double who surveils them. All this is the foundation of a revolutionary organization.\textsuperscript{74}

He argues that an uncompromising milice must be formed that works exclusively in the interests of the nation, rather than rely on the army that might negotiate with rioters. All this must be done as the politicians and military leaders continue to forfeit their authority, becoming pseudo-socialist bureaucrats. He notes that the Bolshevists, as part of their “abominable oeuvre,” institute re-education programs to produce leaders for the future. Bertrand wonders, perhaps with his Cercle Fustel de Coulanges in mind, “why can this not also be done in the interests of a good?” But where will the leaders come from to lead France into this new age? He argues once again that France should look to the example of the Germans, who are themselves mimicking Bolshevist tactics. Quoting German fascist intellectual E. Gunther-Gründel, he envisions a “race of leaders” who will also arise in France, and usher in a new era. Where will this new race of leaders who will regenerate France come from? The answer remained the same, as ever: “I believe they already exist here: our colonies overflow with them. And they are neither Blacks nor Yellows, but the sons of good mothers, these hardy seedlings, transplanted from the old soil of France.”\textsuperscript{75} With all of Bertrand’s propagandizing in the inter-war period, as he traveled across Europe and North America, there always remained the avatar of virile national regeneration: the settler. For

\textsuperscript{74} Bertrand, \textit{Le livre de consolation}, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 88-9.
Bertrand, the new race of French fascists, born to lead the war for eternal peace against barbarous bolshevism and cultural degeneration, is the ultimate product of the colony. Just as the ‘trenchocracy’ of Mussolini was, thanks to the experience of the mechanized hell of the battlefield, most fit to lead Italy after being purified in the Great War, the settler purified in colonial warfare was most fit to lead France. The battle between settler and colonized was translated to France in a battle against a barbarous Communism. And here again, the settler was saviour for the nation, a symbol of another France on other shores finally promised to return and redeem the dying metropole. Although like many far-right contemporaries he stated that the French character made them immune to fascism, he believed they nonetheless needed to mimic its lessons. And here Bertrand ironically maintained his belief that Latin individualism would only be reinforced as the French drew further lessons from the barbarians. Ironic, in that the enemy image of the German barbarian of WWI, which Bertrand thought would teach the civilized metropolitan French about rebarbarization, was now assimilated wholeheartedly as the image of the fraternal ally in a barbarous battle for civilization against international Bolshevism.

Other Settlers, Other Shores

In his last years, Bertrand was increasingly troubled by signs of Western decline against the energetic forces of Muslim reformism, Arab nationalism,
worker’s radicalism, Communism — especially during the years of the Popular Front. As people in Algerian political organizations manifested increasing anti-colonial nationalism, or people in France elected socialist coalition governments, he searched elsewhere, across new shores, for a symbolic solution to his fears of Western Civilization’s decline. He would continue, as a member of the Académie Française, to deliver conference lectures, including at the 1938 Volta Congress in Rome, and the Congrès eucharistique national d’Alger in 1939. And for a brief two weeks in June and July 1937, he was the official representative of the Académie Française at the second Congrès de la langue française in America, held that year in Québec. While on his visit he received an honorary doctorate from the Université de Québec on the first of July.

Bertrand was in Québec for only just over two weeks but believed he found there the consoling evidence of a society that had remained true to the colonizing genius of France — its eternal promise and hope realized. This visit, though brief, was later written down as the climax in his published memoirs of his embassies — which included visits to Spain, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The timeless example of Québec stood against what for him was a threatening world of metropolitan decadence, international bolshevism, and foreign barbarism. This was certainly a lot to for him to discover about Québec in the

space of only several days mostly attending conference talks. His view of Québec was probably at least to some degree influenced by Québécois intellectuals he met there, like Olivier Maurault—the neo-traditionalist scholar, clergyman, and rector of the Université de Montréal. However, his views of Québec seem already mostly fully formed, which he had elaborated in his speech he delivered there just shortly after arrival. Maurault later accompanied Bertrand to New York on his visit to what he saw as the heart of the soul-less and materialist modernity of American culture—a culture Bertrand contrasted with the spiritual vigor of Québec society.

When Bertrand delivered his speech at the conference, he emphasized Québec’s colonial vitalism in the face of American barbarism. Maurault also spoke, and attempted to correct Bertrand: for Maurault, Québec should not be seen as a colony, but a veritable province of France. Here Maurault may have misunderstood Bertrand as well as French impressions of Algeria. Bertrand believed Algeria, as a colony, was also a province of France—embodying regional values of the petite patrie on other shores.

Within this wish-fulfillment of his fantasy-Québec, he was struck by how the French race, decadent and divided by class at home, had in North America preserved a tradition of the petite patrie, or the provincial values of tradition and piety. Yet for all Québec embodied as the true inheritor of French tradition, it also mimicked what he saw as American barbarism. For Bertrand, Americans were
barbarians, who embodied a materialism that was as repugnant to him as a communist materialism. Yet Québécois people, rather than be lost in this sea of barbararism, were invigorated by struggling against it, and in opposition to American culture had adapted and mimicked its modernizing can-do ethos, in order to compete culturally and not be overwhelmed to the point of losing their French character. Thus Québécois people were possessed with a vitality for French virtue and civilization that defined them, a French vitality which back in Europe, was barely recognizable to Bertrand. In other words, this colonial people, isolated and struggling against the dissolution of their own culture, had become purified, and culturally virile, by allowing some American influence, and with this infusion of a barbarous vitality, and with their shared and constant struggle to maintain their culture, were thus paradoxically in a better position to retain with strength the French traditional values and civilization that the French themselves had lost. At least, this was the message Bertrand wished to communicate to his French readers back home, an example he wished them to emulate, and for which he urged their continued support for a French Algeria.

So in Bertrand’s impressions of Québec, there is a repeated concern about opposing yet mimicking American barbarism, and this particular discussion is a component of his more general concern for colonial vitalism. Québec produced a more virile and spiritual people because of a similar monumental landscape as was found in Algeria, but also because French Canadians had unified together in
their shared existential struggle surrounded by foreign barbarism, most threateningly by American barbarism. So they mimicked its supposed savagery, to retain their own culture—stealing the vitality of the barbarian to infuse a stale French culture with a vibrancy not shared in France. But this colonial mimicry of a foreign barbarism which he constructs here as the essential narrative to Québec’s history, is exactly the same one with which he had described how his “master race” of Algerian settlers triumphed in North Africa, by mimicking and thus opposing the savagery of Muslims, and how he thought France could survive Communist infiltration, by mimicking German barbarism in the form of Nazism. For this critic of French decadence, true France, and true French identity, was always constructed at the margins, as each barbarism opposed to France was placed peripherally around a Mediterranean source that was, in its essence, as formless and intoxicating as the Latin sea itself. For Bertrand, French identity vehicled Latin liberty, humanism, and Catholic charity, but was over-refined and insufficient in itself to resist the force of foreign cultural and political contagion—so the solution was to mimic the examples and tactics of foreign barbarism, to reinvigorate the French people, and bring them closer to the originary barbarism of their classical roots. And the French colony was thus a laboratory for creating perfect and pure true Frenchmen. And just as he had argued with Algeria, Québec stood in as a laboratory for his views on the need of a constantly renewed French vitalism in the face of an uncertain modernity. Québec, in his speech and
writing, is a remarkable condensation of all his other works’ conclusions, in a literary career spanning decades. Bertrand’s Québec was a neo-traditionalist evangel, offering hope and salvation for a France divided politically, and he was its apostle for a metropolitan audience back home. It was a useful fantasy for Bertrand, who felt he was facing the twilight of Western Civilization, a France confronted on both sides of the Mediterranean by Jews, Muslims, and Communists. Québec, or rather, this fantasy of Québec, was the boiled down abstraction of all his previous writings, which he offered as a “consolation” for France and Algeria ruled at the time by a socialist and Communist coalition government. However, Bertrand finished his paean to Québec with the worried avowal that even there, socialists and trade unionists were on the rise and gaining in militancy—an inconvenient interruption of reality into his otherwise colonial North American reverie. Bertrand’s utopian vision of French civilization regenerated by virile settlers was checked by inconvenient realities even across the Atlantic Ocean.

The Twilight of Civilization

Bertrand’s vision of French identity is a strange one, but one that was not unfamiliar to other French neo-traditionalists, and indeed many colonial intellectuals as well. Bertrand’s classical Mediterranean, the location of all the values he held dear, was an eternal “anachronistic space,” or a space that was
temporally out of joint with or behind the present. Latin settlers’ routes into Algeria were reaffirmations of their classical cultural roots. They traveled in time as well as space across the Mediterranean, across the colonial threshold, to a Roman African past that would be the mythopoetic foundation for a European future. But bringing this past back home, to make it the future of an imperialist metropolitan France, was always a frustrated dream that he could never resolve, yet nonetheless informed his strange perambulations as well as political evolution. The Mediterranean, as it was likewise presented in the writings of Valéry and other contemporaries, was timeless and more than a little vague in terms of its positive attributes. It stood in for everything Bertrand valued in French and Western Civilization. But it was defined in its essence by what lay at its periphery: Anglo, Germanic and American barbarisms to the North and West, Arab, Muslim, African, Slavic and Communist barbarisms to the South and East. France reflected, opposed and assimilated what it was not. This was the hidden truth at the heart of French classicism, French history, and Latin identity itself. The Mediterranean was an empty space that stood for the heart of what was authentically French — defined in mimicry of both Mediterranean civilizations long past, like Greece and Rome, and Mediterranean civilizations now, developed in the midst of the Arab Nahda. At the heart of Bertrand’s neotraditionalism was an emptiness defined only in a nihilistic opposition to a

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78 For a discussion of “anachronistic space,” see Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather, pp. 40-42.
foreign barbarism it mimicked. And at the heart of this vision of a Greater French identity, was an emptiness and formlessness—only given shape by classicism and barbarism, the twinned poles of mimicry by which French identity was measured in space and time. This was a national identity that was, like Barrès’s recuperation and evocation of an authentic French spirit, already obliterated by modernity. There was no past to return to. It required the dedicated work of a generation of nationalist intellectuals to reimagine it, to give it symbolic form, and to usher in a new hope for civilization in the face of barbarism. This obsession across his lifetime of work marks Bertrand as one of the most sophisticated, and certainly disturbing, modernist and avant-garde intellectuals in French history. It was by drawing upon his avant-garde roots (avowed or not, the avant-garde was as much his patrie as France) by which he ordered his colonialist nationalism. This intersection between modernism and colonialism in Bertrand’s works has since been forgotten or isolated in historiographical debates produced after World War II and after decolonization.

Bertrand’s work can easily be quarantined to a metropolitan or colonial setting. In most historiography, he flits in and out of the picture, suddenly appearing as a key Catholic intellectual in France, a French Hitlerian, a colonial novelist, or a theorist of French regionalism (alternatively for Lorraine or Provence). But by following Bertrand’s routes across the Mediterranean and Atlantic, instead of isolating him to one particular setting, a better understanding
of these seemingly isolated positions and contexts becomes possible. And perhaps more importantly, it puts into relief an underlying logic as to his political positions as a leading colonialist and fascist intellectual in this period. This transnational perspective provides not only a better understanding of Bertrand the intellectual, but the complex imaginary field from which French identity and an intertwined colonial and fascist politics was assembled—in the inter-play between barbarism and the French mimicry of the other. French identity in its most exclusivist formulation was only able to be elaborated as that which it was not. To become truly French meant to mimic the image of France’s barbarous enemies—enemies that slip the one into the other at a shimmering hallucinatory frontier—Arab became German became Communist became Jew and back again. As with other contemporaries’ models of French authenticity, such as Maurice Barrès’s, Bertrand’s elaboration of a rooted Latin self was inchoate and essentially empty—only defined parasitically in opposition to, and in mimicry of, the other. This was the secret to French authenticity for this modernist fascist, and modernist neo-traditionalists generally. It is the secret transnational history at the heart of integral nationalism.

In conclusion, it should be stated that Bertrand’s conflation between regenerated races of settlers and fascists of course papers over the real political divisions, riots, street battles and competing political graffiti that proliferated in 1930s Algeria—not to mention the complexity of settler societies that never
became one people, never regenerated France, except in the fascist fantasies of Louis Bertrand; by the end, he even faltered in his belief in the power of writers, such as himself, to shape degenerate and barbarous masses. He saw only twilight for Western Civilization, as the putative barbarism of, for instance, migrant and working-class people, or the barbarism of Algerians who sullied themselves and France by supposedly ‘mimicking’ civilization, were an enemy against which he urged his own barbarous colonial mimicry in turn.

In any case, it was the agitation of supposed barbarians that was the sign of a coming twilight for Bertrand. And on the eve of WWII, there were ever darkening signs. But the ones that troubled Bertrand, the ones that he saw creating a new barbarous Dark Ages, were not those of Nazism, but the actual living struggles of millions of people in the colonies and metropole, who never, in the end, became what he dreamed—reflections in an endless hall of mirrors of colonial mimicry and barbarous violence.

The narrative he constructed in his memoirs was of an individual facing the inhuman onslaught of history and civilizational decline. But this onslaught was not in reality inhuman, only dehumanized in his works. It was the dawning agitation of supposed barbarians—migrants, workers, Muslims, Jews, and Communists—that was the sign of a coming twilight for Bertrand. His health

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79 Louis Bertrand, Crépuscule (Paris: Éditions Dumas, 1947). These last and posthumously published essays by Bertrand touch on his piety, declining health and advancing age; these are personal fears which are twinned to his fears of a declining Europe in the face of the rising barbarism of colonized and proletarian peoples.
failing in his last years, he retired to his villa at Antibes, surrounded by Orientalist knick knacks and paintings gathered from the Maghrib, as he finished his last work, fittingly titled *Crépuscule*. He died an enthusiastic Nazi collaborator in Vichy France, in 1941.

What are we to make of Bertrand? Instead of seeing him as only an Algérianiste, we should understand him instead as another purveyor of paradoxes of fantasies of authenticity in this period. A transnational ultranationalist, a Symbolist, a neo-traditionalist, a colonialist, and a fascist—not unlike a number of writers of the generation to which he belonged, including of course Barrès, to whom we return later in our discussions of Algérianiste regionalism. These strange intersections at the heart of neo-traditionalist fantasies of French identity, certainly hegemonic among settler intellectual subcultures, are to be examined in how they ordered even the works of the most famous of anti-fascist settlers, Albert Camus.

Bertrand has been situated in the historiography as a colonial theorist and a fascist. This chapter sought to detail, by closely examining his life and works, the threads that connected these two titles through his impressively developed and sophisticated modernist aesthetic strategies. But it is worth taking a step back, and evaluating this relationship in the context of the rise of fascism in the inter-war period. How does Bertrand’s work fit in more broadly with fascist writers and propagandists of the 1930s? His positions certainly fit the criteria of
almost any definition of fascist both at the time and in contemporary French historiography. It is instructive to read his writings and life against Robert Soucy’s description of what the latter calls the “common denominators of European Fascism” in the 1930s. These included:

…a strong distaste for democracy — for social and economic as well as political democracy. It was only in cultural matters, in their pandering to some of the most parochial, authoritarian, and vicious aspects of popular culture, that fascists were, in a sense, democratic. Fascism’s strong distaste for political, social, and economic democracy was accompanied by a rejection of class conflict on behalf of class collaboration; a desire to eliminate left-wing trade unions and replace them with corporatist or company unions; a passionate right-wing nationalism that denounced Marxist and liberal internationalism in foreign affairs and Marxist and liberal divisiveness in domestic affairs; preachments that spiritual goals were higher than material ones, which allowed fascist theoreticians to treat left-wing demands for more economic justice as metaphysically shallow; a tendency to define spiritual regeneration in military terms; a hatred of cultural decadence; and a taste for violent solutions to political conflicts, which included the notion that it was virile to crush one’s opponents with physical force.⁸⁰

Bertrand’s 1930s fascist writings fit this description well enough, indeed probably better than most of his far-right contemporaries. But there is something strangely familiar to these ideas. His 1890s writings seem to be almost as equally captured by this description. If terms like aesthetic Symbolist, colonial propagandist or political fascist are easily distinguishable as abstract terms or heuristic devices, these were all inter-related and inseparable in the individual case. The same could be said, for that matter, of other intellectuals at the time. Bertrand’s

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fantasies of settlers fashioned into a new race who, transcending class struggles in the decadent metropole, revitalized their Latin race in a constitutive violence, were fantasies which Bertrand aimed squarely at his French audience. This spectacle of a regenerated race was fashioned in a constitutive work of art that would reinvigorate his readers, a work of art that would crush Marxist and republican dogma and weakness with the conquering force of his virile ideas. These fantasies informed his writings across decades, in novels, essays and memoirs, and appeared under different titles and epithets. These fantasies only came to be recognized as fascist as the institutions and organizations of fascism rose in Europe. Like some other fin-de-siècle intellectuals, his writings were like the false dawn that preceded the heat of the popular fascist movements of the inter-war period.

Bertrand was considered by colleagues at different times in his life, a leading classicist, a leading regionalist, a leading neo-traditionalist, a leading colonial theorist and novelist, and a leading fascist, both in Algeria and in France. Bertrand’s ideas certainly developed and changed over time, but it is remarkable how consistent this polymath was in his ‘spiritual principles’. Indeed, like Barrès, whose career, like so many French intellectuals, he anxiously followed, Bertrand’s fascism seems already developed in his avant-garde fin-de-siècle Symbolist fantasies. Certainly, Bertrand, like his other neo-traditionalist colleagues, was able, in the context of the Franco-French culture wars of the inter-
war period,81 to help popularize and disseminate neo-traditionalist ideas and programs. However, these were ideas, like palingenetic nationalism, that existed in various combinations in other supposedly discrete discourses, such as those about Algeria, and including in the works of Albert Camus.

Bertrand’s colonial classicist fantasies did not create fascism, but instead were ones with which a European reality caught up. Bertrand’s Symbolist fantasies of vitalism, primitivism, regeneration and conquest found fruitful ground in colonial soil. And as with the violence of colonial overseas conquest generally, his fantasies came back from Algeria to a Europe, on the eve of cataclysm, now ready for him. It is not fantasy that creates reality, as Bertrand believed, but it was a reality that caught up with his fantasies, and gave them a fitting name that had until then been comfortably labelled colonialist, traditionalist, or modernist – the fitting name of fascist.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Neo-Traditionalism in Colonial Algeria: Political Reaction and Cultural Regeneration

“The ideas of L. Bertrand were not only of interest to an elite; they descended into the street, surviving their author.”
-Rabah Belamri

“Literature is always a work of propaganda.”
-Algérianiste Robert Randau

Chapter Four completed the strange trajectories of Bertrand: from avant-garde Symbolism, to Algerian colonialism, to metropolitan fascism. This chapter continues a study of his neo-traditionalism, in the context of the settler society he left by the turn of the twentieth century. This was a settler society that in the inter-war period would come to be the setting for many of Albert Camus’s writings, the formative experience for this key twentieth-century intellectual.

This chapter provides a bridge between these two French figures, and provides some brief though underappreciated context to Camus’s Algerian writings: it first examines the important inter-relationship between French fascism and settler society in Algeria, and then the institutional structure to settler aesthetic movements in which Camus was involved. In each of these contexts, Bertrand’s ideas on colonial regeneration and Latinité were important components. Finally, it surveys some of Camus’s early writings, thus providing
some background to the following chapters which examine in greater detail his engagement with neo-traditionalist aesthetics and politics.

Fascist movements in inter-war Algerian settler society enjoyed dramatic popularity; this is an important specific colonial context for understanding the writings of a host of French and Algerian intellectuals of whom Bertrand and Camus are only two of the more recognized in Europe and North America. With a few notable exceptions, particularly the magisterial history of Algeria by Mahfoud Kaddache and the forthcoming study by the Croix de Feu/Parti social français scholar Samuel Kalman, this colonial fascist context remains underexplored and often misunderstood in studies of l’Algérie française.¹ It is this specific context that helps illuminate some important reasons why Bertrand’s work came to be seen as synonymous with the colony and the specific context in which Camus became initially politicized as a young man. The following two chapters examine Camus’s writings more closely with an eye to his aesthetic-political strategies. As he traveled across the Mediterranean to France he confronted a metropole in crisis, as Bertrand had before him, according to the colonial and neo-traditionalist framework which permeated the intellectual settler subcultures from whence he came. But unlike Bertrand, he confronted it through

an anti-fascist framework as well. These paradoxes at the heart of Camus’s writings, what might be seen as a neo-traditionalist anti-fascism, unravel in close readings of his dramas, novels and essays. But first, this chapter looks to the inter-war colonial society: marked on the one hand by an increasingly vocal nationalism by Algerians, and increasingly violent political reaction among settlers. It is in this context that settler aesthetic movements from this period can be better understood, as well as the shared myths of settler society from which Camus would construct many of his own fantasies about France and the West.

**Settler Fascism**

One can easily trace many of the key moments in the history of the French far-right, often explored by historians of fascism on the metropolitan side of Greater France’s Mediterranean, and there find these same moments become more intense and violent in the settler communities of Algeria. The Dreyfus Affair in France was an important moment in Jewish, French, and/or European history. The public debates surrounding the Affair politicized an entire generation in differing ways. But it is important to remember that in this period in France, it was Italian migrant workers who were subject to much more deadly, though less remembered, nativist riots. However, in Algeria, the anti-Semitic violence around the time of the Dreyfus Affair was as violently deadly as that faced by Italian workers in France, as well as being widely praised among settler
elites—across the political spectrum from republicans to radicals to reactionaries, liberals, conservatives, leftists and the far-right. Max Nordau observed that, “In Algeria, the persecution of the Jews is far beyond that in France [...] There, they have completely ravaged [Jewish neighborhoods] and even engaged in murder. From many sides, they call for the abrogation of the Crémieux decrees, that conferred upon Algerian Jews the rights of French citizens.” 2 If modern French history is rightly remembered for the Dreyfus Affair, fascist leagues and parties, and the Vichy Regime, it is also important to remember that even in 1930s France, a France bordering Nazi Germany, that a Prime Minister, Léon Blum, was Jewish—while in Canada by contrast the Prime Minister of the period admired Hitler. France was complex. France was diverse and divided in people’s political affiliations and contradictions. Settler society was also divided, but far-right parties and organizations enjoyed a popularity there, and engaged in more violent rhetoric and actions than in the metropole. In Algeria, the far-right was in some areas, such as Oran, hegemonic. It is clear that inter-war Algeria saw the most active, violent and popular fascist movements in France. If the Vichy Regime that met the fall of France to Nazi Germany consistently applied anti-Semitic measures beyond the desires of Nazi officials, settler representatives from Algeria consistently demanded even further persecution. As Michael Marrus and Robert Owen Paxton sum up the pressures on the Vichy administration

2 Max Nordau, *Écrits sionistes* (1936), p. 68
regarding anti-Jewish legislation: “It was Vichy that felt pressured by Algiers in Jewish matters, rather than vice versa.” ³ They note that Émile Morinaud wrote in Le Republicain de Constantine in 1940 of “the joy that gripped the French when they learned that the Pétain government was at last repealing the odious (Crémieux) Decree.” ⁴ Ferhat Abbas by contrast condemned removing Jews’ civil status, as he argued that Algerian Muslims would find it difficult to celebrate this given Jews were now relegated to persecution which was similar to what Muslims had experienced all along in the colony. In fact, the virulence of racial supremacy in settler society was so intense, consistent and pervasive, that it preceded the violence of the Dreyfus Affair and lasted beyond the terrorism of the OAS. ⁵

In this context, something strange is apparent among assimilationist or integrationist debates by Algerian elites in the inter-war period, something that is too rarely discussed in contemporary studies: assimilationist or integrationist Algerians agonized about becoming French. This was not primarily because they worried about assimilating into a French liberal democracy, but because they worried they were assimilating into a settler society of overwhelming political reaction and racial supremacy and hierarchy. The society into which they were

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³ Marrus and Paxton, Vichy France and the Jews, p. 194.
assimilating was not in the Landes or Brittany, but the settler societies in Algeria.  
Rabah Zenati’s case is particularly instructive in this matter. Editor of La Voix Indigène, he is frequently cited as having been the strongest and most consistent advocate for Algerian assimilation to French Algeria and in many works the most liberal. In contrast to Ferhat Abbas, he remained committed to the total

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6 These were the conditions — along with the centuries of historical specificity to the Maghrib, and memories of the series of insurrections that were no small part of colonial Algerian history — from which, for instance, activists in the Parti du Peuple Algérien and other movements sought to create and shape a centralizing, nationalist program, albeit with its own elisions of cultural specificities. In a March 1938 article in the PPA’s journal El Ouma, Aboul Fadri wrote, “An instinct of self-defense has brought together the republicans in France against the fascist danger; why then would the instinct for self-defense against colonialism not bring together all the Muslims who struggle in good faith for the emancipation of their brothers — to come together under a common program?” Aboul Fadri, “Pour un rassemblement musulman,” in El-Ouma, Friday March 11, 1938. Another PPA member, writing under the name Ibonu-Jala, critiqued the fantasy of a parliamentary-led emancipation in Algeria by judging it against the realities of the colony: “any allegiance to [the Blum-Violette] project by the parties of the Front Populaire was just an alibi: an alibi that could not erase the fact that an agricultural worker is still paid eight francs for a fourteen hour day; that the prisons overflow with Muslim activists charged for political crimes [...] just as in Hitlarian Germany and Fascist Italy, all those who have dared to criticize the regime are now in concentration camps.” Ibonu-Jala, “Ce que fut pour nous l’expérience du Front Populaire,” in El-Ouma, 24 July, 1938. In contrast to Camus’ writing on destitution and community, Mohammed Dib’s 1950s Algerian trilogy explores the individual and collective lives of underclass and peasant Algerians in and around Tlemcen, who move from desperation to increasing anticolonial resistance. In his work, illness is presented both as a concrete condition of poverty as well as a metonymy of colonialism. The conditions of hunger, fear, violence and exploitation are constitutive, not just of his characters’ colonial abjection, but also of their anti-colonial resistance that overflows its constraining boundaries.

7 See for example his portrayal in Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria, and especially Gosnell, The Politics of Frenchness of Colonial Algeria, where he is portrayed as a liberal assimilationist. Gosnell mistakes Zenati and Hassan for two separate people. One should avoid conflating the case of Zenati with other assimilationists, who were each quite distinct in approaches, beliefs, and experiences. The Mediterranean humanism of many of these assimilationists, repudiated by nationalists in the colonial period, was recognized after the fact to be what it is: a rich source of Algerian cultural history. As Ali Mérad wrote, “this still relevant and fruitful literature would justify in a certain sense the humanist vocation of the Maghrib and its opening to the Mediterranean civilization — that of tomorrow.” As quoted in Jean Déjeux, Littérature maghébine de langue française, (Naaman, 1978), p. 80. See also Tassadit Yacine-Titouh’s Chacal ou la ruse des dominés: aux origines du malaise culturel des intellectuels algériens, in which she argues that many of the assimilationist intellectuals were having to speak a doubled language to both French and Algerian audiences in the face of the surveillance, threats and violence by colonial authorities. Tassadit Yachine-Titouh, Chacal ou la ruse des dominés: aux origines du malaise culturel des intellectuels algériens (La Découverte, 2001).
assimilation of Algerians into French society—or at least as much as the French yet distinctive peoples of Corsica, the Basque country or Brittany. Zenati like other assimilationist intellectuals bifurcated France: there was the ideal to follow across the Mediterranean Sea, and the reality to repudiate in the colony. Unlike almost every other liberal assimilationist of the 1930s, Zenati remained dedicated to assimilation even after what Leo Kuper calls the “genocidal violence” of 1945 Sétif and Guelma, and until his death in 1952. Zenati, unlike most other assimilationists, was also widely believed to be an agent and spy for the colonial authorities. He was deeply concerned with the barbarism of settler society, but also increasingly believed that fascism was the inevitable political order for France and the world. Writing under the pseudonym Hassan, he argued in 1933

8 Interestingly, many regionalist movements in post-war France, with pre-war regionalism tied to Vichy, Maurras and Barrès, turned instead to modeling themselves on anti-colonial movements—another example of France’s modernity constructed in imitation of colonized subjects. See Herman Lebovics, Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age (Duke University Press, 2004), passim.

9 It is striking how literary and classicist France appears to Zenati, who explicitly ties his familiarity with French culture to the colonial classroom: “From Montaigne to Anatole France, by way of Descartes, Pascal and Rousseau, from Corneille and Racine to Richepin stopping for a moment at Chateaubriand, Lamartine, V. Hugo and many others, from Villon to Barbusse, with a long pause with la Fontaine, Voltaire, Diderot, Zola and the Pléiad of writers who fashioned the First and Third Republics, we have followed with emotion the efforts of the French in creating a new world, to establish justice and peace among men.” Zenati, “Un peu d’histoire,” La Voix Indigène, no. 144, Thursday, March 17, 1932.

10 See Leo Kuper, “Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century,” in Genocide: An Anthropological Reader (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), pp. 62, 48-73. Kuper’s introduction of the term “genocidal massacre” was used as a way of distinguishing large-scale genocides from specific instances of genocidal violence, however, he may have been underestimating the numbers killed; Boucif Mekhaled, Chronique d’un massacre : 8 mai 1945, Sétif-Guelma-Kherrata (Paris: Syros, 1995). Although the massacres of 1945 are often accurately highlighted as a pivotal moment in the politicization of Algerians, intellectuals like Abbas had already repudiated France and had entered or formed nationalist movements in the 1930s and during the Second World War.

11 Zenati “lost all influence for having been suspected of collusion with the Administration.” Centre des Archives d’Outre-Mer (CAOM) 11 H 48 “Évolution de la politique indigène en Algérie, depuis 1934,” mss. dated May 23, 1936.
in “Le Monde est Fasciste” that the world was becoming more fascist (here he conflates Hitlerian Germany, Bolshevik Russia, and “American Rooseveltisme” as fascist) and that

France is at its heart fascist. Its internal conflicts condemn it to follow the Duce. It is only waiting for a ‘strong man’ to tidy things up. Having never lacked men, one has to believe that the end is near. And what will become of the Islamic world? Fascism can only be sympathetic as it does not break with a belief in God like Bolshevism does...\textsuperscript{12}

On good terms with the Algérianiste Robert Randau, he increasingly fell into the orbit of Morinaud, one of the leading anti-Semites of the Dreyfus Affair, and published articles in his Républicain de Constantine. Rabah Zenati’s fantasies of liberal assimilation ran into the realities of a fascizing Algerian settler society.\textsuperscript{13}

Why was the racial supremacy in this settler colony comparatively more virulent than in the metropole—even in the era of the Dreyfus Affair? The answer is found in the question. The settler colony, as settler colony, was located in a thoroughly militarized space, in which genocide was the product of policies that were alternatively deliberate or negligent, ranging from the “tent cities” or concentration camps of the nineteenth century, the shelling of urban civilian populations, the eradication of entire communities through mass murder, and the

\textsuperscript{12} Hassan [Rabah Zenati], La Voix Indigène, no. 224, Thursday September 7, 1933.

\textsuperscript{13} An introductory discussion of Zenati can be found in Louis Pierre Montoy and Guy Pervillé, “Zenati” Parcours, Recherches biographique Algérie 1830-1962, no. 10, nov. 1983.
violent suppression of the frequent uprisings against colonial rule.\textsuperscript{14} Ferhat Abbas, even while still a partisan for a French-ruled Algeria, and years before the election of the Nazis to power in Europe, wrote that the colony was administered according to the logic of “a vast concentration camp…”\textsuperscript{15} with collective punishment, circumscribed movement and forced free labor the rule of law in what was territorially and legally France. This and other facets of colonial Algeria meant that neo-traditionalist aesthetic-political programs would be appropriated and extended in distinct ways by settler elites. As Lyautey had observed, the metropolitan demarcation between civilian and military was blurred in the figure of the settler. Some settlers were leftists, some were of the far-right; some were liberals, some were conservatives; some were rich, some were poor. All benefited from their status as settlers, and all benefited from the colonial subjugation of Algerians.

Settler society in 1930s Algeria was as complex and diverse as it had been when Bertrand re-imagined it in the fin-de-siècle as a unified Latin people. But in the years preceding the Second World War, it was also the site of the most popular, sustained and violent fascist organizations in inter-war France. Many settlers gravitated to the Action Française and the Croix de Feu among other far-right parties. Far-right mayors were popularly elected in major cities, and local

\textsuperscript{14} Sidi Mohammed Barkat, \textit{Le corps d’exception: les artifices du pouvoir colonial et la destruction de la vie} (Paris: Amsterdam, 2005); Sylvie Thénault, \textit{Histoire de la guerre d’indépendance Algérienne} (European Schoolbooks, 2005).

\textsuperscript{15} Ferhat Abbas, \textit{Le Jeune Algérien}, \textit{op. cit.}
organizations that deemed metropolitan far-right parties too restrictive proliferated, such as the Bertrandian-inflected Union Latine of Oran mayor Jules Molle, and the succeeding Amitiés Latine of Gabriel Lambert.16 Molle’s and Lambert’s organizations, especially popular in Oran, adopted the neo-traditionalist mantra, popularized by Bertrand, that the settler community was united as a Latin race on African shores, and constituted in their opposition to Jews, and their supremacy over Arabs.17 The French “Ligue d’Union Latine”, a neo-traditionalist Catholic political organization founded in 1920, also had some success in the colony. It also advanced “L’Idée Latine”, as propagated by the famous writer and post-war humanitarian, Raoul Follereau. He took a similar line defending Franco, and that French and Spanish settlers were united as a people while Jews were the enemy of all (which was not at all the experience of persecuted and surveilled Spanish migrants who came to Algeria fleeing Franco’s Spain).18

Far-right flyers and graffiti were ubiquitous features in the public spaces of 1930s settler communities. In Constantine in May 1937, Action Française flyers warned: “Royalists! The Jews of LICA [Ligue International Contre

16 CAOM 9H49 Folio : Politique Française. Front Populaire et Croix de Feu.
17 CAOM 11H48 see in particular “Commissariat Central No 275-C. Objet Réunion Publique. RAPPORT SPECIAL concernant la réunion organisée par la Section Locale des ‘Unions Latines’”; “Département d’Oran. POLICE SPECIAL no 3091. AMITIES LATINES. Inauguration du local”; CAOM 9 H49 Folio: Politique Française. Front Populaire et Croix de Feu. Note CAOM 11 H48 and CAOM 9 H49 are part of Series H: Affaires Indigènes, yet these fonds are a rich resource on settler far-right organizing.
18 CAOM 11H48 “RAPPORT SPECIAL concernant la réunion organisée par la Section Locale des ‘Unions Latines’”
l’Antisémitisme] insult your leader: ‘Maurras, that senile and cowardly old man’ (Droit de vivre 10-6-36) Respond!” Graffiti found on many walls the next month read “France for the French—The Jews to Palestine.” Far-right parties, like colonial authorities, attempted to drive a wedge between different communities.

For instance, several far-right parties attempted to find favour with Algerian Muslims even as they furiously attacked their further enfranchisement, as well as individual Algerians. Yet as police reports on far-right organizations observed, there was little to no favour among Muslims for these far-right groups, except by a few individuals, notably integrationists seeking electoral alliances with far-right parties. For instance, Belkacem Bentami, who had been a leading assimilationist intellectual and opponent of the nationalist Étoile Nord Africaine, had joined Doriot’s Parti Populaire Française, but as a report to the Governor-General Georges Le Beau pointed out, “Doctor Bentami enjoys no credit or authority among his fellow Muslims.”

Another report on the widespread popularity of the far-right in Algeria observed determined efforts by the Croix de Feu to win Muslim support, in part to interrupt Muslims broader support of leftist organizations, and particularly in order to increase dues, but the efforts were almost entirely fruitless. As with most fascist writings, opportunism and obfuscation prevailed over any particular purchase on reality or ideological consistency: flyers were circulated in Algeria appealing to Muslims: “Your

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20 CAOM 9 H49
prophet Muhammad said that the Jew is your enemy—don’t forget it,” even while in metropolitan France the pro-fascist journal *Candide* shed crocodile tears for Jews’ safety in the face of Muslim intolerance in the French colony.

The Centre d’Informations et d’Études for the Préfecture d’Alger drafted a report, “La Politique Indigène dans le Département d’Alger au début de 1939,” which found that only the ‘évolués’ or Algerian francophone elites had any interest in European politics, and “as a whole, the parties of the right, the PSF and the PPF, still only have a few Muslim members, and [besides leaders like Bentami] their sincerity is sometimes doubtful.” Instead, the “overwhelming majority” of évolués “remain firmly oriented towards the left, despite the fact that promises made in 1936 by the parties of the Front Populaire were only weakly applied.”

Algerian settler society was permeated by far-right parties and organizations. These groups drew upon Bertrand’s ideas on Latinité and colonial regeneration as highly useful elements for their propaganda. Even metropolitan figures of the far-right came to interpret Algeria through Bertrand’s conceptual framework. Maurras’s writings, a priori official doctrine of the Action Française, in the inter-war period were indistinguishable from Bertrand’s in his impressions of settler society. No longer were Bertrand’s Latin theses scorned as they were in Maurras’s review of *Le Sang des races* decades earlier. Maurras, who was met in

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21 CAOM 10H88 “Préfecture d’Alger. Centre d’Informations et d’Études. Secret. La Politique Indigène dans le Département d’Alger au début de 1939”
Algeria in 1938 by celebrations befitting a head of state, pronounced settler society to be one of a fusion of Latin races that stands as an example and icon of regeneration and virtue for metropolitan France, even as they struggled against the secret machinations of Jews and Freemasons.  

Colonial Scholarship and Institutions

This was the political context in which neo-traditionalist aesthetic movements developed in the inter-war period, in tandem with far-right political movements also drawing on similar myths. But writers and intellectuals in the colony, as with their counterparts in the metropole, were also shaped by their particular institutional positions within society. Drawing on Bertrand’s work, they developed a neo-traditionalist aesthetic movement that would be ‘authentically’ Algerian. And as with scholars and artists before them, they explicitly saw their work as contributing to the colonization of the country itself. They were cultural producers self-consciously mobilized in valuing this land as a Latin territory that had been conquered by imperialist Muslims, and recently liberated by the French. Bertrand’s work provided the Algérianiste literary movement an aesthetic-political world-view, but this myth of a Latin root to Algeria’s past, now resurrected by French ‘liberation’, though central to the Algérianistes, could be traced through many of the writings of colonial scholars.

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and artists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These figures were key contributors to the colonization of the country. As with the political context of fascism in the colony, the institutional role of scholarship in colonization was also an important component to the formation of aesthetic movements drawing on Bertrand’s theses, and from which Camus and others would develop their own particular positions.

Scholarly institutions were set up soon after the military invasion of Algeria. In 1835 the Bibliothèque d’Alger was founded. Archaeological and historical societies were established in Algeria the mid-1850s, with the encouragement of General Randon.23 The Société d’Archéologie de Constantine was founded in 1853, and in 1856 the Société Historique Algérienne was founded, with its publication, Revue Africaine. The establishment of scholarly societies was not particular to Algeria. This was also part of a general French—and European—phenomenon through the nineteenth century. Hundreds of regional scholarly and artistic societies were founded, many based near universities such as in Montpellier, to study and reclaim regional cultures and ‘folklore’ (the term was introduced in French in 1846) that were in the process of being transformed in the face of an expanding state infrastructure.24 The inaugural issue of the Bulletin de géographie de Constantine makes clear that their organization was part of the

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broader French phenomenon of multiplying scholarly societies in increasing understanding of the specificities of French regions and territories.

Scholarly societies in Algeria were followed by the development of academies, just as in the French provinces, and then followed by the founding of the Écoles supérieures d’Alger in 1879, which became the Université d’Alger by government decree in 1909. Augustin Bernard listed the accomplishments of these scholars, including the biologist Émile Maupas, and biologists Trabut and Battandier, and among them counted Louis Bertrand, all of whom he argued were both shaped by the conquest, and in turn shaped Algerian society in their studies of the geography, sociology, biology, history, agronomy, politics and literature of French Algeria. He wrote “one must note the influence of the conquest of Algeria on French literature with Fromentin, Masqueray, Louis Bertrand; on painting with Delacroix, Fromentin, Guillaume Dinet and others. Writers and Algerian artists, even indigènes, have been participating in this movement since a few years and raise the intellectual patrimony of France.”

This idea of the subculture of scholars, scientists, writers and artists acting as crucial agents of colonization was not only one made by Bernard, but by later Algérianistes themselves.

Bernard’s assessment was mirrored in Ferhat Abbas’s critique of the subcultures of scholars, political figures, writers and intellectuals who, as they

were key members of the colonial institutions in Algeria, were instrumental in lobbying and shaping French policy in Algeria in the interests of settler hegemony over colonized Algerians. Abbas, like other Algerian 1930s integrationists, tended to whitewash metropolitan responsibility and lay blame squarely in the settler communities. However, his analysis of an elite shaping the colony did correspond to many of these very scholars’ and intellectuals’ own stated intentions. He saw these colonists controlling French Algeria as a state within a state:

This oligarchy had its sociologists, economists, and key thinkers. Their names are Eugène Étienne, Thomson, Élysée Sabatier, Bertagna, Gastu, Roux-Fressineng, Max Régis, Borgeaud, Gustave Mercier, Louis Bertrand, André Servier, Robert, Raoux, Dr. Moll, Morel, Morinaud, Abbo, Duroux, Dr. Borderes, Pr. Millot, Boyer-Bance, Laquière, de Serigny and others, less important and less known but powerful enough too, to dictate their order to the prefects and governor-generals.26

Neo-Traditionalist Movements in the Colony

In Algeria, European and settler intellectuals formed regionalist cultural movements in the colony, including the Algérianistes and the École d’Alger, along with a number of journals and the literary prizes.27 Members of these groups were often also colonial administrators and scholars. The cultural organizations that vehicled their ideas included the Association des Écrivains Algériens and the Société des Romanciers Coloniaux, which also gave out annual

26 Abbas, Le Jeune Algérien, p. 25.
27 A good discussion of literary prizes and the Algérianistes can be found in the unpublished manuscript by Jean Pomier in CAOM 75 APOM 49 (Fonds Arnaud).
literary prizes to esteemed authors. The Grand Prix Littéraire was a literary Algerian regionalist award, but there was the Prix Coloniale Française as well. Louis Bertrand was president of the Société des Romanciers Coloniaux in 1925, which celebrated settler artists as diverse as Louis Lecoq, Robert Randau, and Isabelle Eberhardt. Journals of these neo-traditionalist movements included Afrique and Revue de l’Afrique du Nord, a literary rival of metropolitan regionalist journals like Soleil and Simoun, though Algerian regionalists also appeared in the pages of other journals including Cahiers du Sud and Revue des Deux Mondes. The conservative La Mercure de France published regularly on the topic of French regionalism, including this nascent Algerian regionalism.28 Patricia Lorcin argues,

While successive literary schools in colonial Algeria, namely the Algerianist School and the Ecole d’Alger, sought to delineate themselves from Bertrand’s thought, echoes of the Latin myth persisted. His ideas were developed in a variety of ways by the algérianiste school of colonial literature, which emerged in the interwar period. Whatever their individualities, the authors adhering to this school strove to create an image of settler connaturalité based on the mirage of shared experience and communality of character.29

28 See for example, “Régionalisme” in La Mercure de France, 1er Novembre, 1921. The subculture of Algerian intellectuals (like the micro-societies of most intellectuals) saw personal rivalries and jealousies proliferate as much as political disagreement. Jean Pomier Chronique d’Alger, pp. 43-46, 71, 59; Gabriel Audisio, La Jeunesse de la Méditerranée. See also “Les romanciers coloniaux,” in Afrique 8, Jan. 1925, pp. 6-8; Louis Lecoq, “La littérature impérialiste et l’Algérianisme,” in Afrique, 4, pp. 1-4; Olivier Todd also points out the context of Algerian artists Camus frequented, Clot, Fréminville and others were among the literary and artistic crowd of Algiers, and among Camus’ friends, who would eventually count Camus as one of their greatest. Olivier Todd, Albert Camus, une vie, p. 76.

The longest-standing president of the Association des Écrivains Algériens, Jean Pomier, defined Algérianisme as

a forceful defiance in the name of truth against the Orientalism of the Bazaar; furthermore, an agreement with the principles of the Bertrandian thesis of a ‘Latinity’, in the measure that it gave us, after all, as much right to ‘hold’ this country as the invaders who had come from Arabia or Egypt, to destroy the Latin heritage.  

In Pomier’s manifesto of the Algérianistes, Algeria was the site of a “battle cry for global Latinité.” But it was “Le Sang des Races that had created a school.” Randau, for whom Bertrand had high esteem, could not deny the latter’s influence in his own works. According to Pomier, Algérianistes had been trying to create a fraternal Algeria, the AEA even had indigenous writers. However, Pomier despised any Algerian who did not gratefully follow the example laid out by the Algérianistes, such as his intellectual opponent Ferhat Abbas.

The Algérianistes, as Peter Dunwoodie details, imagined a literature for Algeria that, instead of exoticizing the indigenous population, would focus on a new colonial people. They imagined the disparate ethnic groups of colonists as a vigorous Mediterranean people who would find, on the shores of Africa, away from a decadent French metropole, a renewed and permanently restored antiquity, with a new, youthful people whose unity would be fashioned by the

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31 Pomier, Chronique d’Alger, p. 23.
32 CAOM 75 APOM 45 (fonds Arnaud), the manuscript by Pomier especially, pp. 111, 168; Pomier, Chronique d’Alger, p. 23.
33 Dunwoodie, Writing French Algeria, passim.
artists themselves—if at the expense of a realistic purchase upon the existing
diversity of settler communities in Algeria. Their vision of a colonial Algeria had
many echoes with the regionalist movements of Provence and Lorraine. Settler
authors were not isolated from metropolitan communities of intellectuals. Like
other settler writers, Camus was drawing on metropolitan intellectuals, like
Maurice Barrès and André Gide, but also in his case Artaud—recasting their
strategies of social reconstitution, grafting them upon a colonist mise-en-scène.

For Prochaska, literary culture and settler society developed dialectically.
Literary Algérianistes sought to imagine an incipient community, brought
together in waves of immigration and settlement, as it was forming, while hoping
to fashion and elide the class and ethnic hierarchies, and political factions, among
the settlers themselves. The survival of ethnic descriptors like ‘Spanish’, and
‘Maltese’ among the very writers who privilege this Latin race suggests that the
success of this fusion was more a fantasy of unity than everyday lived reality.
Stephen Gosnell notes that colonist journals and newspapers, unlike the work of
the Algérianistes, had very little news from Algeria, their headlines ripped from
European pages. In the work of Louis Bertrand, Robert Randau and Jean Pomier,
national fusion and the new Latin civilization is always presented as an advent,
always just on the cusp of realization. Algerian settlers were overwhelmingly
urban, despite the encouragement that they settle the land.34 Most settlers were

34 Prochaska, Making Algeria French, p. 140; Izzo and Fabre’s La Méditerranée française has a chapter
which presents a conventional division between the Algérianistes under Bertrand and the École
non-French, with Italian, Spanish and/or Maltese roots, given citizenship through the *jus soli* naturalization laws of 1889. These settlers came to be known as the classed and raced term ‘*petits blancs*’ of Algeria—a subset of colonists that included the maternal ancestors of Camus. These were a people he would privilege in his writings, even though he would submerge many, though not all, of their differences in a unitary Mediterranean identity.  

It was these Algerian settlers, ethnically distinctive in their language, cultural organizations, settlements, radio broadcasts—such as the Spanish-speaking populations around Oran where Camus was born—that were represented as a unified people, grafted and fused upon the shores of Algeria, in opposition to Algerian Jews or Muslims. The Association des Écrivains Algériens published *La Revue de L’Afrique du Nord*, to show that settler intellectuals’ work could rival that of the metropole, “to force the French of France to renounce their secularism, to show them that they have at their door the source of riches that they must develop without surrendering it to their rivals. To make them study the beliefs, the spirits of their Arab and Berber brothers of who must be conquered morally after the material conquest.” The journal would “create a NORTH AFRICAN THOUGHT in harmony with the Mother-Country.” This North African thought was an elaboration of Bertrand’s theses on Latinité, with the artist as promethean shaper of this new race.

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Settler artists and writers were explicit in positioning themselves as cultural legislators of settler society. Audisio and Camus repudiated immediate predecessors like Bertrand, but not the need to fashion settler society with constitutive myths. Despite their many differences, settler intellectuals agreed on certain foundations. First, the settler presence on African shores reestablished a Latin Mediterranean hegemony interrupted centuries before by a foreign Arab invasion. Second, these returning Mediterranean settlers (primarily of Spanish, French and Italian backgrounds) had putatively been constituted as a distinct but unified people in the colony through processes of destitution and threats of dissolution: whether by their exile from Europe, their extreme poverty and hardships in colonizing a purportedly barren country, or their common efforts in the face of constant existential danger from a barbarous enemy. Finally, Mediterranean colonial culture was often contrasted with a decadent French metropole. Though colonial intellectuals drew upon and shaped these settler myths for different aesthetic and political programs, they all took the myths to be self-evident.

So far we have examined the prevalence of far-right reaction in Algeria, the institutional setting of neo-traditionalist movements in the colony, and the

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37 In his manifesto for the Algérianiste aesthetic movement, Jean Pomier argued that artists performed a supplementary role to the colonial administration. Artists’ works were the cultural component to the colonial ‘mise en valeur’. CAOM 75 Archives Privées d’Outre-Mer (APOM) 45 (fonds Arnaud).
organization and central myths of the Algérianiste movement in particular. Given this context, it is worth turning to the late 1930s, and the early politicization of Albert Camus as a promising young settler intellectual in the colony, who like Gabriel Audisio was a partisan of the Front Populaire. Their works on settler society were rejections of the Algérianistes far-right sympathies, but nonetheless elaborations of the very myths constituted by this neo-traditionalist movement.

**Camus as a Young Colonial Artist**

Albert Camus was born in 1913 in Mondovi, a wine-growing community just outside of Oran, and was raised in the Algiers working class, and largely Spanish-speaking, suburb of Belcourt after his father had died in WWI. He said he had grown up in an apartment without books, with his mother (born in the Balearic Islands) grandmother uncle Étienne, and older brother Lucien. His early aptitude at sports was checked by his recurring bouts of tuberculosis. Illness would plague him through his life, which he thought had been brought on by his “excess of sports. Exhaustion. Too much exposure to sun.” This was an ironic self-diagnosis, given his celebration of these very excesses of a Mediterranean life as the foundation of a moderation against excess.

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40 Lottman, *Albert Camus*, p. 721n.
While a student at the University of Algiers, in 1933, Camus wrote an unpublished poem entitled “Poème sur la Méditerranée”. A number of images, full of meaning in his later works, are centered upon the Mediterranean, echoing the works of the Algérianistes:

Noon/Meridian, the sea is unmoving and warm. It accepts me without cries, a silence and a smile. Latin spirit, Antiquity, a sail/veil of delicacy upon the tortured cry.

Latin life that knows its limits, Reassuring past, oh! Mediterranean! Again upon your shores voices triumph that are mute, But that affirm because they have denied you!

[...]

Urgent/Pressing Antiquity Mediterranean, oh! Mediterranean sea! Alone, naked, without secrets, your sons wait for death. Death will render them to you, purified, finally.

Camus’ youthful poem celebrates a utopian timeless spirit—universal, but geographically located on a Latin sea. But rather than his poem being only a youthful exercise, it is also home to a set of images that would reappear in his politics and classicist aesthetics. He wrote, “The world in which I am most at ease: the Greek myth.” This fantasy was not merely an imaginary cardinal point of reflection for Camus. His idea of regeneration, against the decadence and

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41 o.f.: Midi.
42 o.f.: voile.
43 o.f.: pressante.
nationalism of his age, would be found in resurrecting a Mediterranean spirit that would speak to all in the West.

For Camus, the Mediterranean is the cradle of a timeless Latin culture, a regional *patrie* that has remained (if nonetheless occulted by history) upon its unmoving shores—and its people tied to its lands. There was a tension in the works of earlier Algerian regionalists, and in the works of Grenier, between the geographical fixity of these Mediterranean values for a settler population in Algeria, and their universal applicability—analogous to the host of French arguments about France’s specificity in bearing universal values of civilization.

Camus’ entire oeuvre manifests a much more explicit attempt to present these ideas as being crucial to the West’s regeneration faced with the crisis of decadence. In 1937, Camus wrote in his notebook,

> Nationalities appear as signs of disaggregation. With the religious unity of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire barely severed: nationalities. In the Orient the all remains. Internationalism attempts to give to the West its true sense and its vocation. But the principle is no longer Christian, it is Greek. Humanism today: it still affirms the divide that existed between the Orient and the West (Malraux example). But it restores a force.\(^\text{45}\)

Camus saw the hopes of Western regeneration in an internationalism that, rather than Marxist, is classical humanist. Although it is widely noted that Camus was influenced by Malraux, the work of his that Camus seemed especially impressed with was the absurdist *La Tentation de l’Occident*, a fictional

correspondence of letters between French and Chinese writers, in which each
defines themselves through a process of mimicry and differentiation of the other.

However, Camus did not merely adapt a grammar of meridional
regionalist discourses to a project of Western regeneration. This tension, between
regionalist particularism and universal Western values, was already, more or
less, explicit in the works of writers like Barrès, Maurras, Bertrand, Grenier or
Audisio. Regionalism, rather than being only an infra-national movement as it is
sometime portrayed\(^\text{46}\), was also a trans-national one: the regionalist grammar of
the *Midi*—sun, sea, ties to the land and a classical past—was grafted onto the
image of Algerian settler communities. Whether with regionalist or Western
cultural referents, the threats of internal decadence or foreign barbarism would
reveal a necessity to recuperate, from within, the ancient values of the
Mediterranean, Greek or Roman. Against a foreign backdrop as threat, these
values would be all the more clearly defined. Emily Apter effectively connects
Camus’ characterization of Algerian settlers in *Le Premier Homme* to his writing
on democracy and dictatorship in *Ni Victimes ni bourreaux*:

Camus’s utopic projection of Algerian democracy shelters
another figment of the imagination—pan-Mediterranean man.
Caught between his Barrèsian sense of *pied-noir* entitlement to
Algerian soil and his status as privileged global citizen of a
cosmopolis of letters, Camus invented the figure of a nationless
regionalist, at home in the world. Pan-Mediterranean man is set up
to become the agent of a new world order that would be neither
‘national nor even continental, certainly neither occidental nor

oriental. It must be universal. . . . It is a form of society where the law is above governments, this law being the expression of the general will, represented by a legislative body.'

An Exilic Patrie

By the end of 1935, Camus had joined the Communist Party in Algeria, improbably at the advice of his anti-Communist mentor Grenier. As in metropolitan France, Algeria was the site of numerous conflicts between the ultra-right and the partisans of the Front Populaire. Street battles were common in settler neighborhoods, simultaneous with increasing French anxieties about Italian hegemony in the Mediterranean. In much of Algeria, especially Oran, it was far-right parties and organizations to which settlers overwhelmingly gravitated. Camus remembered that the settler population was overwhelmingly anti-Semitic. Camus, like other intellectuals such as Gabriel Audisio, became increasingly engaged in challenging the far-right intellectual hegemony in Algeria.

As well as performing theatrical works in Algeria, Camus helped found the Algiers Maison de la Culture, a regionalist cultural center supporting the Front Populaire, which opposed the “right-wing doctrines” manifest in many

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48 CAOM 9 H 49.  
French neo-traditionalist and Algerian regionalist programs. Its manifesto aimed to “make Algiers the intellectual capital that it has the right and the duty to be in the Mediterranean world.” This project was part of a broader strategy by the Communist Party in France to open several Maisons de la Culture: regionalist cultural institutions where local people could come to appreciate cultural forms of leftist solidarity and propaganda. There Camus presented a speech entitled “La culture indigène : La nouvelle culture méditerranéene”.

Aiming at the racialist image of Latinité, typified and shaped in the works of Bertrand and Charles Maurras, as well as at Italian designs on North Africa, he advocated a regionalism that would embody a universalist Mediterranean culture comprising all its people—yet nonetheless focused on “Western men”.

For Camus, the role of the intellectual, in this period of mobilized engagés, is vital to the endeavor of revitalizing and reconstituting a Mediterranean people. A Mediterranean culture will only last as long as it retains its “spiritual principle.” In a passage that would later be echoed in *L’Homme révolté*, this identity was not an “abstraction that leads men to massacre,” but a common sensibility that is

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50 *Essais*, p. 1321.
51 As quoted in Lottman, p. 137.
53 See Apter’s thoughtful discussion on this subject in “Out of character: Camus’s French Algerian Subjects,” p. 510.
54 Camus, *Essais*, 1322.
emotionally felt.\textsuperscript{55} It is the intellectuals and artists who will foster this Mediterranean identity and reveal its universal truths to “Western men”; truths that might oppose the colonial myths of a Latin “master race” of settlers (to put it in Louis Bertrand’s reactionary terminology).\textsuperscript{56}

But as Connor Cruise O’Brien, Azzedine Haddour and Patricia Lorcin have noted, Camus cannot help but repeat in this speech the colonial racialist categories of earlier writers like Bertrand, by framing this universalism in conventional colonialist and traditionalist terms, as well as effectively excluding Arab North Africans.\textsuperscript{57} For example, in Camus’s mythologizing lecture, his eternal Mediterranean had transformed an exclusive Christianity’s “Judaic” exclusivity into a universal Catholicism, while reactionary exponents of Latinité had turned their backs on a Mediterranean exemplified by “the great tragedies and great comedies of a strong and hard Greece.”\textsuperscript{58} In emphasizing cultural differences between himself and his opponents, Camus here denies the acknowledged centrality of Hellenism in both Bertrand’s and Maurras’s aesthetic and political works. That Camus wants to foster an anti-fascist solidarity is clear in this essay, as is his anti-imperialism when it comes to an Italian Ethiopia, though not a French Algeria. He explicitly targets the \textit{Manifeste des intellectuels pour la paix en Europe et la défense de l’Occident}, a 1935 manifesto in support of the

\textsuperscript{55} Camus, \textit{Essais}, pp. 1322-3.
\textsuperscript{58} Camus, \textit{Essais}, pp. 1323, 1324.
Italian invasion and occupation of Ethiopia, signed by Bertrand and Maurras among other far-right intellectuals. Yet his emotive arguments, here as elsewhere in his works from this period, are immersed in the neo-traditionalist imagery and vocabulary dominant among his settler intellectual contemporaries, a set of imagery and vocabulary that threads its way through settler writings as different as those of Jean Pomier and Gabriel Audisio. This should not be surprising; Camus was writing here not as the liberal icon he has since become, but as the young settler intellectual—and influenced by Maurice Barrès among other neo-traditionalists popular among his peers. Here he calls on intellectuals to reawaken a sense of solidarity among settlers. For settlers, he resuscitates colonial myths in the service of creating social cohesion against fascism. As O’Brien observes, Camus’s discussion of Mediterranean culture champions Latin, Christian, Feudal, and other neo-traditionalist icons in a speech putatively on Algerian “indigenous culture.” These tensions in Camus’s writings are the subject of the following chapters.

Conclusion

Young Camus, as activist for the Maison de la Culture, was a settler artist seeking to help develop a regionalist subculture politically distinct and opposed to Bertrand’s fascistic colonial fantasies that had become the blueprint for the

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60 O’Brien, Camus, p. 12.
most influential settler political and aesthetic movements. And yet in Camus’s elaboration of another anti-fascist option, he also repeated many of the settler myths developed by Bertrand a half-century before. In his attempts to oppose settler fascism, he drew on the neo-traditionalist fantasies of colonial regeneration and national unity that an earlier generation of avant-garde artists had developed in a different period and context in 1890s France. As we see in the following two chapters that examine Camus the dramatist and Camus the essayist respectively, these tensions remained unresolved in his writings, indeed they structured his writings, and were a tension that has been occulted but strangely repeated in later appropriations of Camus as post-war liberal icon in French and Anglo-American scholarship.
CHAPTER SIX

The Dramaturgy of Terror: Albert Camus’s Artaudian Debt

“The Plague marks, without any discussion possible, the movement from an attitude of solitary revolt to the recognition of a community in which one must share in the struggles.”

-Albert Camus, letter to Roland Barthes.

“It does not matter that the information provided be precise or true. Uncertainty is itself more effective in its ends. It allows the danger to appear like a many-headed hydra: Arab, Jew, foreigner, German, Italian, Panislamist, Communist, tuberculic, syphilitic... Hygienic language dominates, for everything is pathology.”

-Nedjma Abdelfettah, “«Science coloniale» et modalités d’encadrement de l’immigration algérienne à Paris (1917-1952).”

“The lumpenproletariat, once it is constituted, brings all its forces to endanger the ‘security’ of the town, and is the sign of the rotting irrevocable decay, the gangrene ever present at the heart of colonial domination.”

-Frantz Fanon, Les Damnées de la terre

Albert Camus opposed colonial fascism by re-deploying the neo-traditionalist fantasies of settler society in a number of complex ways. In Chapter Six and Chapter Seven, we examine more closely the appropriations of neo-traditionalist aesthetic-political strategies which haunt his work, and the manner in which these fin-de-siècle ideas were propagated by the unlikeliest French intellectuals in the twentieth century. Given his resurgent importance in the ever-increasing literature on the ‘War against Terror’, such an investigation is all the more timely.

1 Camus, Théâtre, pp. 1965-6.
A number of Anglo-American academics, such as Paul Berman, Michael Walzer and Jean Bethke Elshtain, have recently summoned for their audiences the examples of past intellectuals and their struggles with terrorism and totalitarianism. The Western intellectual most commonly enlisted has been Camus: hero of the French Resistance, agonized Algerian settler, who stood for a politics of refusal in the face of extremism and nihilism. These critics privilege his work in their urgent appeal to refashion the public against its threatened dissolution in the face of visceral extremism. This canonization of Camus, however, not only glosses over his own vexed relations with his status as an Algerian settler, it misses a deeply-related concern that orders much of his work: the duty of the artist in not merely representing but actively creating and shaping a society and culture by means of his work. What might be dismissed as a romantic authorial cliché misses what he saw as the socially constitutive and productive role art had in regenerating society. In this endeavor Camus drew, astonishingly, upon an aesthetic of terror to reshape society, using Antonin Artaud’s dramaturgy to this end. Camus’s Artaudian appropriation was a means of reworking neo-traditionalist myths of settler society in order to purge them from what he saw as its reactionary politics. However, his attempts to rework these classicist/colonialist myths using avant-garde dramaturgy resulted in their very recuperation as well as their extension back to a metropolitan, and global, readership.
Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) was, along with Jacques Copeau, among the most influential French dramatists of the twentieth century. Even before World War II, there were a number of dramatists who sought to apply his dramaturgy in their own work, including Camus, then a young settler artist and engagé in Algeria. Camus was certainly drawn to Artaud’s neo-classicist concern for revivifying the power of ancient myths on a modern stage. But Artaud’s work also appealed in its innovations and challenges. For Artaud, the theatre should be alchemical, transforming the audience in a performance that supplemented a violent reality in purifying excess.² He sought to transform words, signs and the body itself upon the stage, through sacred incantation, mystification, and the violent exploding of taboos, such as murder, suicide and incest. The theatre was not a retreat from reality, but its cruel and terrifying intensification. Camus, appropriating aspects of Artaud’s dramaturgy, sought to create in works like Caligula and La Peste an immersive spectacle of collective destitution and Artaudian terror. This terror would, according to Camus, reconstitute his audience against the nihilism, tyranny and social dissolution of his era—aesthetic strategies that likewise inform his political writing. His prescriptive role for the artist, in fashioning this imagined community through a dramaturgy of virtual terror, is an appropriation of Artaud that would seem, paradoxically, the very subject of Camus’ ethical critique of an aestheticized politics of force. Needless to

say, now, in this present era with its own ‘War against Terror’, when his voice is once again called upon in Anglo-American writing as the timeless voice of moderation against terrorism and totalitarianism, an historical examination of Camus’ own aesthetics of terror has become all the more vital, and timely.

An Untimely Camus

To better understand his self-assigned role of the artist as legislator of collective passions, it is first worth noting the number of Anglo-American critics who have come to uncritically internalize his own avowal as a Promethean artist whose reach extends beyond his own time. There are of course many English-language works on Camus, but, as noted, a surprising number of Anglo-American critics have suggested, at different moments, that Camus’ eternal truths must be called upon to refashion society when needed most by American or Western people. This is a rhetoric that elides his continuing relevance in very

different writings, as diverse as those of Ahmed Taleb-Ibrahimi, Assia Djebar and Abdelkader Djemaï.⁴

By the time of his death in 1960, Camus was arguably the most revered French intellectual among Anglo-American audiences.⁵ And yet despite consistently being one of the most widely read francophone authors in the United States since his death, he has been repeatedly rhetorically summoned as the occulted voice of principled measure, speaking to a society threatened by dissolution and political extremism. For instance, in 1972, Robert Pickus wrote in his preface to Neither Victims nor Executioners that Camus was needed now more than ever against American anti-war protest, Black Power, and third-worldism.⁶ However, by the end of the Cold War, Edward Said judged that Camus’ writing had become less available to Anglo-American concerns.⁷ In 1996, David Prochaska agreed: “Albert Camus has moved toward the margins.”⁸

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⁴ In his famous prison letters, Ahmed Taleb-Ibrahimi writes of the profound disappointment he felt in Camus during the War of Independence. For Taleb-Ibrahimi, Algerian intellectuals embraced him as a true Algerian, while Camus turned from them to side with French repression. Camus’ sudden death haunts Djebar’s Le blanc de l’Algérie, where he is fraternally presented together with Algerian intellectuals tragically murdered during the Algerian Civil War long after his own death. Abdelkader Djemaï’s Camus à Oran presents him as one of the great writers of Algeria, yet whose works on colonial Algeria efface as much as they inscribe. See Ahmed Taleb-Ibrahimi, Lettres de prison (Alger: SNED, 1977); Assia Djebar, Le blanc de l’Algérie: récit (Paris: A. Michel, 1995); Djemaï, Camus à Oran.


His literary exile, if there in fact ever was one, was brief. Already in 1998, Dominick LaCapra observed that there seemed to be a resurgence of (English-language) studies on Camus.\textsuperscript{9} The same year Tony Judt wrote, “there is something untimely, even un-French about Camus.”\textsuperscript{10} In Judt’s writing, Camus the French intellectual is once again represented as the solitary, life-affirming hero, faced from all directions by the death-driven ideologies of his time.\textsuperscript{11} Judt’s essay on Camus in \textit{The Burden of Responsibility} is a fascinating and often insightful portrait, but only as Camus fashioned himself in his own literature, interviews and notes. To give an example, Judt concludes his essay with a curious set piece in which Camus courageously offers other intellectuals “a twentieth-century coda to Pascal’s more famous wager.”\textsuperscript{12} Judt expands on a brief note in Camus’ notebooks about an evening meeting with Malraux, Koestler, Sartre and Sperber, a meeting upon which Judt condenses the crises of twentieth-century liberalism: according to his notebooks, Camus had asked his evening companions, don’t you agree [...] that we are all responsible for the absence of values? What if we, who all come out of Nietzscheanism, nihilism, and historical realism, what if we announced publicly that we were wrong, that there are moral values and that henceforth we shall do what has to be done to establish and illustrate them. Don’t you think that this might be the beginning of hope?\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{9} Dominick LaCapra, \textit{History and Memory after Auschwitz} (Cornell University Press, 1998), p.74.  
\textsuperscript{11} James LeSueur’s \textit{Uncivil War} (2001) also presented Camus as "being out of step with his own time." LeSueur, \textit{Uncivil war}, p. 87.  
\textsuperscript{12} Judt, \textit{The Burden of Responsibility}, p. 135.  
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}
Judt concludes, “Fifty years much has changed, but in France as elsewhere, Camus’s wager is still on the table—now more than ever.” This is a strange conclusion. In a work that celebrates Camus’ honesty in the face of totalitarianism and terror, and for his wager of principled revolt against these threats, Judt improbably concludes his essay by positioning Camus as an almost Sorelian champion of intellectuals embracing regenerative myths to fashion a people regardless of their purchase on reality. Crucially, this meeting Judt details is solely based on a perfunctory entry in Camus’ notebooks. According to Jean Lacouture’s interview with Arthur Koestler, himself no friend of Communism, a contemporaneous meeting was described not as a quiet rassemblement of intellectuals searching for a way out of the extremism of their time, but its opposite, a complete debacle, with Koestler trying to get the other intellectuals on side with de Gaulle, and Camus beginning with vague statements about the proletariat. Malraux interrupted him, “the proletariat, what’s that? I’m not going to let people throw around words like that without defining them...”

According to Lacouture’s interview with Koestler, “Camus became irritated and got lost in his definition. Sartre grew angry. It was a disaster—and a lasting

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14 Ibid.

15 In other words, his rejoinder to his companions is to suggest a Pascalian wager that it is better to act before the public as if there actually were moral certainties, counter to what they (according to Camus) believed. If this is—as Judt argues—a Pascalian wager, it is one in which it is supposedly better to declare that what was believed by these intellectuals was wrong, and then that they should pledge to transform the public through their actions and artistry accordingly, as if these values were actually believed by the intellectuals themselves.
one.” Though this retelling of a meeting by Koestler may be inadvertently more representative of twentieth-century crises among French intellectuals, the point about Camus upon which Judt cannot help but end, is Camus’ desire to fashion the masses according to necessary fantasies.

Only a few years after Judt’s essay, and in the wake of the destruction of the World Trade Center, Camus was once again marshaled out of Cold War retirement in Jean Bethke Elshstain’s Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World, David Carroll’s Albert Camus, the Algerian: Colonialism, Terrorism, Justice, and Paul Berman’s best-selling Terror and Liberalism.


Interestingly, although she does not examine his aesthetics, Elshtain notes Camus’ ability to immerse the audience in the horrors of “despicable cruelty.” Elshtain, Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World (Basic Books, 2004), p. 12. The conclusion to David Carroll’s recent study of Camus, critical of the current White House administration’s policies in the “War against Terror”, concludes with the fantasy that “the Pentagon, the President, and all the President’s men,” read and reflect on Camus’ writing, and then are moved to what he argues is a more ethical position (apparently this dream of Camus’ works reshaping President Bush have had as yet little empirically-verifiable effect, as President Bush did in fact read Camus’ L’Étranger on a holiday). Carroll, Albert Camus, the Algerian, p. 184. Carroll’s most recent study, like Judt’s earlier invocation, argues that Camus is, once again, needed more than ever: “I do not believe it would be an exaggeration to claim that today we are once again living in an ‘age of terror’ which in its general ideological configuration could be compared to the climate described by Camus during the cold war and the Algerian War,” and that it is time to “listen to a voice like Camus’ again…” Ibid. If Judt’s Camus is presented as the ideal French intellectual, Carroll’s Camus is the ideal Algerian. In each case Camus is a timeless hero, assailed from right and left, who combats extremism in all its forms and remains true to a politics of refusal, in formulations that remain ever-relevant. Carroll’s work is a close textual reading of Camus’ novels, but misses much of the broader context to his works. He positions Camus’ argument for the eventual assimilation of Algerians as “subversively anticolonialist.” Carroll, p. 136. If this is so, then almost every colonial administrator was subversively anticolonialist as well, as this was a rhetoric that was uttered by settlers of every political persuasion, including the notorious pro-Nazi immortel of the Académie Française, Louis Bertrand. This fantasy of missed opportunities, of assimilation always just out of reach, is a recurring one in pied noir memoirs—and strangely in recent studies by North American Camusian scholars—but it does not bear historical scrutiny. For an exploding of the myths of
Berman observes, “We are in an absurd situation. Truly, this is a moment Camus would have appreciated. We have reason to be terrified; but it is not a good idea to be terrified.” Berman, a self-avowed liberal pragmatist, sees the sources of his conflated terrorism and totalitarianism in nineteenth-century romanticism. He adapts this critique largely from Camus’ *L’Homme révolté*, which functions as the *mise-en-scène* for his entire discussion. For Berman, an irrational cult of death infused onetime Romanticism, Communism, fascism, present-day Islam, Iraqi Ba’athism, and a supposedly monolithic Palestinian society. On liberalism, Berman does not see its roots in its institutions, but what he stresses repeatedly are the shared desires that shape liberalism as a socially constitutive force, and which require an act of “mass persuasion” on the part of the artist or intellectual. Though Camus the political essayist is invoked throughout Berman’s book, Camus as dramatist is absent. This might seem perfectly natural in a political essay, but Camus’ notion of theatre was intimately connected to his contested political commitments. In *Terror and Liberalism*, Berman’s only discussion of theatre is of Victor Hugo’s play *Hernani*, which he cites as a quintessential example of the romantic origins of irrational anti-liberal terror: “here was a play about rebellion which was itself an act of rebellion—a play in colonial rule as *une occasion manquée*, see Sylvie Thénault’s chapter, “L’Algérie Française, une occasion manquée?” in Histoire de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne ( Flammarion, 2005), pp. 31-32.  
19 Berman, p. 185.
which the hero aimed at freedom, and arrived at murder and suicide." Yet this
description is, inadvertently, a perfect recapitulation of Albert Camus’ most
famous play Caligula. Camus’ aesthetics are in fact much more complex and
ambiguous than has often been presented, particularly in these English-language
studies with their recurring invocations for him to shape a new generation
threatened by terror.

Camus’ Aesthetics and Politics

Central to each of the appropriations of Camus by Robert Pickus, Tony
Judt, and Paul Berman, is a disavowed desire to refashion the public in an age of
decline and threat which connects him to writers such as Bertrand. This is an
organizing principle of much of Camus’ work. For example, the narrative of his
1951 essay, L’Homme révolté, intertwines a critique of decadent and nihilistic art
along with political extremism. If his critique of the social and metaphysical
impasse of an absurdist modernity in Le Mythe de Sisyphe is condensed and
focused upon the problem of suicide, in L’Homme révolté the problem is murder.
His solution to the nihilistic threats of his era is to refashion politics through a
socially constitutive art, with a central place reserved for the legislative figure of
the artist.

Ibid., p. 29.
He begins *L’Homme révolté* by stating that revolt is not only a product of lived oppression, but can be brought forth through the “spectacle of oppression, in which the victim is another,” which is how the entire essay, as an account of oppression and a putatively nihilist decadence, functions.\(^1\) *L’Homme révolté*’s concluding pages explore the possibility for a collective refusal of the nihilism and terror of his era. Here he emphasizes the importance of the artist in shaping people’s passions by means of an immersive and confrontational art. Thus people may confront oppression “relatively” in times of political dissolution and nihilism, safeguarding them from its realization. On the one hand, he disavows that society “should be controlled by artists.”\(^2\) However, in contemporary society, artistic rebellion is crucial in providing a visceral but limited experience of oppression to the people.\(^3\)

What did Camus mean by his call for an immersive art that would thus shape the “collective passions” of people?\(^4\) An entry in his notebooks, written as he was working on *L’Homme Révolté*, stresses the role of the artist in shaping the collective passions of people, and thus politics itself:

> If classicism is defined by the domination of passions, a classical era is one whose art shapes and codifies the passions of contemporaries. Today when collective passions have won out over...


\(^{2}\) Camus, *The Rebel*, p. 273

\(^{3}\) “In order to dominate collective passions they must, in fact, be lived through and experienced, at least relatively.” *Ibid.*, pp. 274, 275.

individual passions, it is no longer a matter of dominating love through art, but of dominating politics, in the purest sense.\textsuperscript{25}

In his 1955 Athens lecture “Sur l’avenir de la tragédie,” he echoed \textit{L’Homme révolté}’s call for a new classicism that would appear in the form of a socially regenerative art, but here as in other writings on drama he discusses the importance of a renewal of tragic theatre to this project. He argues that the absurdity of contemporary life needed to be challenged by the theatre, tragedy above all. But dramatists needed to find a new “tragic language” appropriate for the modern era.\textsuperscript{26} As in \textit{L’Homme révolté}, he felt what was missing was a “genius” who could best express this renewed classicism, and have it carried on by a generation of artists.\textsuperscript{27} Camus seems to have had his own artistic production in mind when discussing this regenerative project. In his notebooks he conceived of his novel \textit{La Peste} in precisely the terms with which he called for a ‘new classicism’ in \textit{L’Homme révolté} and \textit{Sur l’avenir de la tragédie}: “From the point of view of a new classicism, \textit{The Plague} ought to be the first attempt at shaping a collective passion.”\textsuperscript{28}

In his most famous essays and fiction, Camus instead challenged the absurdity and decadence of contemporary European thought not by logical or philosophical argument, but with a call for a socially regenerative art to oppose

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Camus, \textit{Notebooks 1942-1951}, translated by Justin O’Brien (1965), pp. 112-3.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Camus, \textit{Théâtre, récits, nouvelles} (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1963), p. 1707 (hereafter \textit{Théâtre})
\item \textsuperscript{27} Camus, \textit{Théâtre}, pp. 1708-9. Also see \textit{The Rebel}, pp. 269, 275.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Camus, \textit{Notebooks}, 42-51, p. 137.
\end{itemize}
Edward Freeman notes this Camusian concern in his earliest play *Révolte dans les Asturies*: “Pèpe’s dramatic ‘Non!’ does not need to be motivated if one considers him to be a prototype of *L’Homme révolté*. His decision has not been arrived at by a process of logic; on the contrary, it is a sudden surge of keenly felt but ill-defined emotion.” Camus did not entirely renounce reason for a celebration of the irrational. But he sought to immerse the individual reader or audience member in unmeasured excess (*démesure*) and the irrational. This was a starting point towards collectively embracing the classicist limits of measure and order; or to put it in the Gnostic terms familiar to him, the illness was to be cured with a poison. It is remarkable that for a writer deeply committed against public executions, his recurring tropes are suicides, mass-murder, plagues and executions. It is only through a confrontation with death and excess that a measured, virile, and ordered individual and social life could be reconstituted. This unfolding process of regeneration occurs in reaction to a shared spectacle of death, immiseration, loss, or internment – in other words, of a shared, if virtual, experience of destitution. Roger Quilliot notes this approach not only with the protagonist Patrice Mersault in *L’Etranger*, but in Camus’ first unpublished novel, *La Mort heureuse*, where the protagonist, named Meursault, arrives at self-consciousness through a purification by murder and death, and where the

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29 Freeman, p. 29.
30 Destitution has a number of meanings, including its role in Lacanian psychoanalysis. However, in terms that Camus used, it refers here to the deprivation of survival, an important component of works that invoke and explore both the absurd and revolt.
“community, the fraternity of the dead, takes on the character of a near mystical exchange...” 31 In the case of the Meursault of L’Étranger, a settler and murderer of an unnamed Arab, he finds a sense of solace and solidarity, in of all places, among the condemned, imprisoned and colonized Algerians.

In 1944, while working on his novel La Peste, Camus wrote, “I never said that man was not reasonable. What I want is to deprive him of his imaginary survival and show that with such privation he is at last clear and coherent.” 32 By taking his aesthetic strategies for societal regeneration seriously, and situating them in the context of a specific cultural setting in colonial Algeria, and later in France, a great deal can be better appreciated about why he sought to shape audiences with terrifying images of mass-murder, plague, and suicide.

Camus’ efforts to fashion his audience through a spectacle of terror owe a great deal to the colonial endeavor of creating a new settler people and culture through recurring myths of destitution, struggle and a revivified community. 33 But he also reworked these constitutive myths in opposition to the far-right politics popular among settlers. Colonial intellectuals were almost as politically divided as their broader Algerian settler communities. Unlike explicitly pro-Nazi intellectuals like Louis Bertrand, Camus’ aim was to fashion a settler people

32 Camus, Notebooks 42-51, p. 94; “Grenier observed that Camus was constant in his search for eternal values. Jean Grenier, Albert Camus (Souvenirs) (Gallimard, 1968), p. 67.
33 See the discussion of settler myths in Chapter Five.
divorced from far-right politics. David Carroll emphasizes that Camus’ early works were engaged against political reaction in French Algeria. Connor Cruise O’Brien’s study emphasizes that they are in fact steeped in colonial myths of settler hegemony. One of the recurring features of Anglo-American Camusian scholarship is that these two interpretations are often discussed as if they were mutually exclusive. In fact, it is in this intertwined context of Camus’ desires to combat political reaction among settlers, while simultaneously retaining a vocabulary of settler privilege, that his early works, and in particular his dramaturgy, seek to refashion society.

In 1940, Camus traveled to France where he would remain, aside from sojourns to other parts of Europe, North Africa and the Americas, for the rest of his life. He would never renounce his settler roots, but would come to call on Europeans, by means of an immersive art, to embrace a universalism nonetheless rooted in French colonial and metropolitan traditions. In their endeavors to fashion a settler community out of the complexities of actual settler society, colonial authors were not isolated from metropolitan communities of intellectuals. Like other settler writers, Camus shared a belief that the European population needed to be fashioned at the hands of artists and writers. And like other settler writers, Camus was drawing on neo-traditionalist intellectuals, like Maurice Barrès and André Gide, but also in his case Artaud—recasting their

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34 Interview in Demain, 24-30 octobre, 1957, from Camus, Essais, p. 1901.
strategies of social reconstitution and liberation, and grafting them upon a colonial setting. And it is in this doubled context, between France and Algeria, anti-fascism and settler fantasies, that Camus’ aesthetic strategies become clearer.

**Camus and the Theatre**

Although painting and the plastic arts were of deep interest to Camus, it was to theatre, and tragedy in particular, that he would devote much of his life, and by which he would often order his philosophical and political essays.\(^{35}\) Marie-Louise Audin observes that *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* is itself structured like a drama. Metaphors of theatre proliferate and his argument proceeds through an exposition of dramatic and mythical characters: Don Juan, Caligula, Kirilov, and Sisyphus.\(^{36}\) In his “Sur l’avenir de la tragédie,” Camus celebrates the inexhaustible debt of modern French theatre to dramatist Jacques Copeau, but it is the writings of Antonin Artaud’s—Copeau’s sometimes adversary—that he celebrates for having brought tragedy to the forefront of people’s preoccupations: “at the same time the most significant expression of a movement of ideas and reflection on the theatre, is the wonderful book *Le Théâtre et son double*, by Antonin Artaud.”\(^{37}\) Albert Sonnenfeld, E. Freeman and Ilona Coombs are only

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\(^{35}\) According to Camus, “the theatre is quite rightly the highest of literary genres and in any case the most universal.” *Théâtre*, p. 1724.


\(^{37}\) Albert Camus, *Théâtre*, p. 1702; see also Camus, *Essais*, p. 1405.
some of the scholars who have noted the crucial influence of Artaud already in Camus’ first collaborative play, *Révolte dans les Asturies*, written with the *Théâtre du Travail* in 1936.38

Detailing all that Camus read of Artaud is difficult, if not impossible. Camus certainly read the essay collection *Le Théâtre et son double* and *À la grande nuit ou le Bluff surréaliste*, and there are telling signs he also drew on Artaud’s *Héliogabale ou l’anarchiste couronné*.39 When he read these is more difficult to establish, though a familiarity with Artaud is evident in his earliest dramatic works. Artaud’s essays “*Le Théâtre de la cruauté*”, and “*Le Théâtre et la peste*”, were first published in 1934 in the neo-classicist literary journal, *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, co-founded by Jacques Copeau. It is reasonable to suppose Camus read Artaud’s essays even before they were later published together in Artaud’s *Le Théâtre et son double* in 1938. Camus regularly read *La Nouvelle Revue Française* and would even contribute review articles for it; his mentor Jean Grenier was a regular contributor; and in the issue that contained Artaud’s piece on the theatre of cruelty, was a piece by Julien Benda that Camus cited in his own 1938 essay defending the works of Maurice Barrès from charges that he was a fascist *avant la lettre*.

Camus’ *Théâtre de l’Équipe*’s manifesto of 1937, like much of contemporary French theatre, was influenced by Jacques Copeau in its selection of plays, the literariness of the play writing, and its call for an economy of action on the part of the performers. But it also owes a strong, if conflicting, debt to Antonin Artaud in its attempt to realize the theatre as an arena of cruelty that will “demand of works truth and simplicity, violence in its emotions, and cruelty in its action.” As with his philosophical and literary influences, Camus was eclectic in his dramaturgical appropriations. Though Copeau was a major influence on him and his generation, Camus’ statements about the role of theatre shared much with Artaud. In a 1958 interview, Camus stated that his vision of theatre, and its relationship to its audience, was “for tragedy and not melodrama, for total participation and not for critical reflection.” This vision of theatre, as Ilona Coombs argues, calls on the immersive techniques of Artaud by which both he and Camus sought to reorder tragedy in the modern era. But establishing this intellectual filiation is only a starting point in understanding Camus’ aesthetic strategies regarding terror. The works of an artist like Artaud are not like a cargo of identical wares, opened and used the same way by each recipient. To

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42 Artaud’s works have been crucial influences on post-World War II theatre, as well as for some of the most famous twentieth-century French philosophers, including Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, to name only a few. Many of Camus’ generation, including his friend Pascal Pia, were influenced by Artaud. The inexplicably underappreciated poet Jean Sénac, a settler who would go on to found the first association of Algerian writers in independent Algeria, was also an admirer of Artaud.
understand Camus’ Artaudian debt, and its relation to his call for a socially constitutive art, requires a closer look at what was appropriated and to what end.

**Artaud’s Dramaturgy and ‘Virtual Terror’**

According to Artaud, his own theories of theatre found their genesis in his witnessing a performance of an unnamed Balinese play, staged during the Colonial Exhibition of 1931 in Paris. He thought that the modern theatre had become decadent like French civilization. A new totalizing theatre, which would resurrect the force of early Greek tragedy, was necessary to reshape the masses in this age of mass politics. Susan Sontag observes that “Artaud’s argument in *The Theatre and its Double* is closely related to that of Nietzsche who in *The Birth of Tragedy* lamented the shriveling of the full-blooded archaic theatre of Athens by Socratic philosophy — by the introduction of characters who reason.”\(^4^3\) In a Dionysian vein, Artaud came to this realization by witnessing Balinese theatre, which as far as he seemed to know at the time, taps into the terror of life, and immerses the spectator in “dance, song, pantomime and music.”\(^4^4\) Camus wrote in his preface to the 1936 play *Révolte dans les Asturies*, “the spectator must be the center of the tragedy.”\(^4^5\) This idea of a total theatre, a performance that involved forcing the audience into a total immersion of a shared reality, rather than merely

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\(^4^4\) Antonin Artaud, *Oeuvres complètes* vol. IV (Gallimard, 1956), p. 64.

witnessing its representation, was pursued in many of Camus’ stage directions, which included the Artaudian strategies of “synthesizing drama, ballet, mime and music,” surrounding the audience in the scenery, as well as placing actors among the audience.\(^{46}\) Towards the end of 1938, a productive period in which he was working on *Caligula, Noces, L’Etranger*, and *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, Camus wrote that tragedy was accentuated by discordant music between scenes, and by proliferating “oriental” gestures in “cruel dances” through their “unaffected geometry”, which is precisely the language used by Artaud in his description of the Balinese play he witnessed, and his prescription for the way in which modern tragedy will interrupt and confront its dissolute audiences with the terrible realities around them.\(^{47}\) Although Camus’ theatre productions display a great deal of expository and philosophical discussion contra Artaud’s ideas on the body and language, they often contain crucial set pieces that are unmistakably Artaudian.\(^{48}\) For example, there is a play within the play *Caligula* that condenses the entire drama into a series of gestures by the cruel emperor before the Roman patricians and the audience. In Act IV, Caligula silently mimes strange “ridiculous gestures” in a dancer’s robe while “appearing in Chinese shadow” in

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\(^{46}\) Sonnenfeld, p. 118. For Camus, “the decor is conceived to keep the spectator from defending themselves.” Coombs, p. 47. For a discussion on Camus’ Artaudian staging of his plays, see Valette-Fondo, pp. 93-101 and Karima Ouadia, *L’Inhumain dans le théâtre d’Albert Camus* (Éditions Manuscrit), p. 65.


\(^{48}\) Camus utilizes these Artaudian strategies at key moments in which he confronts the reader with the absurd in other works, such as in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, where Camus explains the feeling of the absurd, not by rational argument, but in a set piece in which the reader is invited to imagine watching the spectacle of a man speaking into a telephone, gesturing wildly and inhumanly.
front of a screen. Immediately after this disconcerting performance a guard announces, “the spectacle is over.”

For Artaud, the theatre of cruelty should not be an escape from reality, but the intensification of reality that will act upon and transform the audience through mythic and terrifying symbols:

With famous characters, atrocities and superhuman devotions, we will attempt to focus a spectacle which, without recycling the expired images of the old myths, will extract from them the forces that animate them.

Camus’ own beliefs on the role of theatre strongly echo Artaud’s. Camus believed that “each person has within them some illusions and misunderstandings that must be killed. Simply put, this sacrifice perhaps liberates another part of the individual, the best part, which is that of revolt and liberty.” The Artaudian cruelty and violence called for by Camus’ troupe was not without aim. As Artaud put it:

Whatever the conflicts that haunt the heads of an epoch, I defy a spectator whose blood will have been traversed by violent scenes... to abandon himself on the outside to ideas of war, of revolt and of dangerous murders.

Artaud’s conception of the theatre would confront the audience with a terror that “pushes towards a sort of virtual revolt.”

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49 Camus, Théâtre, p. 88.
50 Artaud, Oeuvres, pp. 102-3.
51 Camus, Théâtre, p. 1742.
52 Artaud, Works, p. 82.
53 Artaud, Oeuvres, p. 34.
According to Artaud, the plague is a significant symbol of this theatre. Instead of finding a modern symbol that will function like Artaud’s theatre as plague, Camus chooses the symbol of the plague itself for his plays Caligula and L’Etat de siège, and obviously his novel La Peste. The plague, Artaud stresses, is an oriental cargo to European shores. Artaud’s “Théâtre et la peste” begins with the Viceroy of Caligari’s dream of his city consumed by the plague. Because of the nightmarish vision, he does not allow a ship to dock; it will carry its terrible oriental cargo to Marseilles instead, which was ravaged by the plague in 1720.\(^{54}\)

The plague, for Artaud, is always simultaneously a symbol of terror and liberation. It is a submersion into aesthetic excess that produces a socially constitutive revolt in the audience, though Camus, more reticent, would usually present the Artaudian cruelties of incest, suicide and mass-murder off stage, or narrated indirectly in novels. Artaud recognized that this terrorizing revelation of the theatre as a plague might lead people to atrocity, but he hoped that it would in fact mitigate the need for violence outside the theatre’s performance, by subjecting the audience to its transformative realities, without recourse to experiencing literal atrocities and death: “There is a risk involved, but in the present circumstances I believe it is a risk worth taking.”\(^{55}\)

Constance Spreen has recently suggested that Action Française founder Charles Maurras’ attack on Romantic literature, as a “plague” upon French

\(^{54}\) Albert Bermel, *Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty* (Methuen, 2001), p. 9
tradition and the nation, was an important influence in Artaud’s decision to
invest his theatre with this evocative symbol. The metaphor of the theater as
plague “recast the plague as a positive force with poetic capacities.” From
Artaud’s point-of-view, the theatre as a “plague” had a doubled purpose, it
threatened to destroy society but also purify it. However, if the theatre as plague
was rich in political significance, the pathological signification of this symbol was
broader than reference to the Action Française and its nationalist and classicist
aesthetic program alone. It was not only in decadent literature that neo-
traditionalists saw symptoms of societal disease and degeneration. In the inter-
war period, immigrants, Jews, Arabs, Germans, Muslims and Communists were
regularly presented as pathological infections to the French body politic. And this
spectacle of ‘foreign’ influence as contagion was not restricted to the ultra-right.
Nedjma Abdelfettah-Lalmi has analyzed how administrators in inter-war France
interpellated North Africans as “colonial subjects, they were neither French, nor
foreigner, condemned to be the focus of increasing suspicion.” Abdelfettah-Lalmi
writes that administrative anxieties about radicalized Arabs or Jews in France, no
matter the actual reality, resulted in a “danger to appear like a many-headed

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56 Constance Spreen, “Resisting the Plague: The French Reactionary Right and Artaud’s Theater of Cruelty,” in Modern Language Quarterly 64:1 (March 2003), pp. 72-3
hydra: Arab, Jew, foreigner, German, Italian, panislamist, communist, tuberculic, syphilitic [...] hygienic language dominates, for everything is pathology...”\textsuperscript{57}

The modern symbol of the plague as theatre was fitting on a number of levels. It simultaneously repeated, intensified, and opposed contemporary discourses of ‘foreign’ ideas and populations as pathology both from the far-right, French administrators, and the ‘mainstream’ press.\textsuperscript{58} According to Artaud’s stated intentions, a theatre of cruelty would purge its audience by immersing it in an intensified vision of the crisis still waiting outside the threshold of the theatre, a crisis nonetheless explained by Artaud in a language as familiar to surrealists as to Maurras, that of a crisis of decadence. In his notebooks in 1942, Camus wrote “the plague is a liberation” — a statement that jeopardizes the assumption that the symbol of the plague in \textit{Caligula}, \textit{La Peste} or \textit{L’État de siège} can too easily be reduced to a metaphor of the Nazis alone.

\textbf{Caligula’s Spectacle of Terror.}

Caligula is a transgressive, daemonic character in Camus’ play. After the death of Emperor Caligula’s sister Drusilla, with whom he had an incestuous relationship, he is confronted in his despair with the absurdity of existence. The action of the play involves Caligula seeking to refashion the decadent people of


\textsuperscript{58} For Camus, the theatre was a place of truth, which revealed the staged dramas of real-life political administrations. Camus, \textit{Théâtre}, p. 1723.
Rome, by sharing with them his revelation—and engaging in what Camus calls in Le Mythe de Sisyphe, “a superior suicide.” Caligula’s personal evolution is rounded by the deaths of the women closest to him: of Drusilla, but also in his murder of the maternal Caesonia, whose deaths are but necessary dramatic steps on his path of terrible liberation. Cherea announces that Caligula’s philosophy is to force people to think through his torture and violence, a spectacle he shares with his subjects, and the audience. Camus has Caligula announce his mission is to replace the plague in order to terrorize the people of Rome into confronting reality. The people can only be transformed and reconstituted, to realize this universal truth embodied in Mediterranean culture, by Caligula’s subjecting them to a spectacle of extreme cruelty and mass-murder—a confrontation with terror and excess Camus also forces on his theatre audience. His decision to have Caligula staged with the audience surrounded by the action and scenery, an Artaudian strategy, emphasizes this impact. When it was first staged at the Théâtre Hébertôt in Paris, after WWII, it was assumed to be an allegory of Hitlerian fascism. According to Roger Quilliot, Caligula is a warning against terror and “is a prophetic play” that suggests the ethical stances of the French

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60 Camus, Théâtre, p. 87.
61 See E. Freeman, p. 86.
62 Freeman assumes that Camus would have played the role of Caligula. Freeman, p. 35.
Resistance. Yet the play’s original version was begun as early as 1936, certainly completed in 1938 and to be performed in Algiers. Camus’ own regional troupe, the Théâtre de L’Équipe, was to perform it. He wrote to Jean Paulhan, “although it was conceived and written in 1938, events have given it a meaning which it did not originally have... it was as I conceived it a drama of the mind outside of all contingencies.” Caligula is a strikingly complex figure: on the one hand he can be seen as a personification of a Maurrassian Latinité, or perhaps even fascist Italy, yet if so the play proliferates in strange emphases in its sympathy for Caligula and his embodiment of the plague.

If the play was misinterpreted, Camus certainly had a hand in this: he had reworked the play during the war, and transformed Caligula from an ambiguous tragic protagonist, who seeks to reveal the truth to society through terror, to more of a terrorizing antagonist. This was accomplished by removing a crucial last speech by Caligula. After his murder, the curtain falls, but he returns from behind the curtain to confront the audience with these lines, excised from the post-war version:

No, Caligula isn’t dead. He’s here, and there. He’s in each one of you. If you had the power, or boldness, if you loved life, you’d witness the wild unleashing of this monstrous or angelic creature. Our era is perishing because it had faith in a system of values, because it believed things could be beautiful, that they could cease

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64 Freeman, p. 47.
being absurd. Farewell, I am about to enter history where those who fear excess of love have locked me up.65

Here Camus’ ending presents Caligula returning from death to challenge the audience one final time to a confrontation with the absurdity and terror of the play, and its transformative potential upon their lives. Rosette Lamont sees this finale as an expression of a youthful Camus full of excess that a mature Camus would repudiate in his quest for measure and order. But Camus did not repudiate excess in his works. Instead he called upon measure and order, constituted in opposition to the spectacle of excess he presented his audience. This pairing of démesure and mesure, excess and moderation, is a leitmotif in Camus’ work; a timeless measure and order is achieved through a confrontation with excess and terror. This logic applies to the narratives of Le Mythe de Sisyphe and L’Homme révolté as much as in his fiction. In “Le théâtre et la peste”, Artaud writes that the theatre, “is an evil because it achieves a supreme equilibrium that is not possible but through destruction.” He argues that the theatre of the plague, “in revealing to collectivities their dark power, their hidden force, invites them to face their destiny with a heroism and bearing that they would never have achieved without it.”66

Caligula is a plague who threatens the populace with his terrible gift of extreme violence and political chaos; he is a scourge whose role is to erase societal apathy and reaction by transforming everyone into either self-aware subjects, or corpses—a fate that will befall him as well—murdered but purified, and speaking a terrible truth to the audience. For Camus, “in ancient drama, the one who pays is always the one who is right.” It is interesting that this classical and absurd character is a Roman emperor. The character who takes Camus’ ideas to their limit is a ruler of Rome; the Roman Empire, as Lorcin observes, was privileged by colonial literary writers like Bertrand as the mythic root of settler intellectuals’ claims to Algerian hegemony. The Latin emperor in his madness transforms all people into self-aware subjects, cognizant of their authenticity in an act of terror visited upon his people, to the horror of the audience. *Caligula,* I would argue, adapts the icons of Latinité through an Artaudian dramaturgy that it might dislocate its audience from any easy identification with them beyond the threshold between theatre and reality.

**The Terror of the Plague.**

Camus’s exploration of the superhuman plague of *Caligula* was followed by his examination of the subhuman, literal plague of his same-titled novel set in colonial Oran. In 1939, he published a searing and impassioned series of articles

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68 Lorcin, “Recovering Colonial Algeria’s Latin Past.”
in the leftist newspaper *Alger Républicain*, where he detailed the famine that was
immiserating and devastating Kabylia, shortly before the paper was shut down
by the colonial government. Camus then moved for several months to the
western coastal city of Oran, where he would work on his essay “*Le Minotaure
d’Oran*”, and his novel *La Peste*, also set there.

Kamel Kateb explains that the recurrence of famine in Kabylia was part of
a cycle of immiseration and epidemics that disproportionately and repeatedly
swept through the Muslim populations in colonial Algeria. This cycle of
dislocation, famine, and pestilence would be a feature of the colonial regime in
Algeria—a predictable result in part of the enclosure of collectively held fertile
lands, seized by the French and settlers.\(^{69}\) While Camus was in Oran, another
outbreak of typhus was killing Algerians to the west of the city. There was even
talk of quarantining Oran, and Camus wrote his friend Emmanuel Roblès for any
details he had on the outbreak.\(^{70}\)

The novel *La Peste* is structured in five parts like a classical tragedy, what
Morvan Lebesque calls “a theatre enclosed in a book.”\(^{71}\) In *La Peste*, there is an
outbreak of plague in Oran, which is then quarantined. Camus recounts through
narratives within the narrative, stories of atrocities and terror, a “scourge” which
descends upon the citizens, who are confronted with a reality against which they

\(^{71}\) As quoted in Coombs, p. 108.
collectively revolt, before the epidemic finally lifts. There are concentration
camps set up to quarantine the infected, but they are for European settlers in the
novel, not the concentration camps, ‘tent cities’, and prisons of the colony which
in reality Algerians were subjected to in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries —
and in which, while during his stay in Oran, thousands of Spanish refugees as
well as Algerians were interred. Camus’ quarantined settlers, a nearly voiceless
chorus, write to their loved ones outside, but because they are limited to a few
lines, their writing becomes formulaic, then symbolic, another Artaudian conceit.

One of the protagonists, a journalist named Raymond Rambert, arrives in
the city to study the sanitary conditions in which native Algerians were living
before the plague erupts. But, in La Peste, Camus does not address whether the
eruption of infection is from native Algerians or what, in the end, the effects are
upon them. He succeeds in reducing their presence even further by locating the
plague’s origins in the Orient, echoing Artaud’s discussion of the plague as
oriental cargo. The threat to the settlers comes from oriental shores, and though
not native to the region, proves impossible to eradicate once it has arrived. The
characters Rieux and Rambert walk briefly through the Quartier Nègre, but only
note the quiet and emptiness; they never enter the households or speak of the
Algerians in this district — a quarantine within the quarantine of the novel.
Abdelkader Djemaï concludes that although Camus wrote exceedingly beautiful
pages on Oran, it was nonetheless an Oran from which indigenous Algerians were strangely erased.  

In one of the key set pieces of the novel, in the midst of the epidemic, the characters Tarrou and Cottard go to the theatre to see a rendition of the tragedy of Orpheus. The actors onstage perform with an economy of action, to the delight of the bourgeois audience that has improbably come to escape the terror of the plague by enjoying a tragedy about death. In the second act, the actor on stage playing Orpheus begins to exaggerate his movements wildly, as if directed by Artaud, and finally literally collapses of the plague, before a horrified audience. In this clever passage by Camus, the intrusion of reality onstage transforms the affluent audience into a mob that crowds the exits rather than confront the presence of death. This passage highlights the power that this death can have to transform people, leaving only Tarrou and Cottard, and the reader, to note the carnage of the performance. There is thus no escape from the terrorizing and constituting effects of the plague by a retreat to the theatre, nor for the reader of Camus’ novel, unless they put down the book. The end of the novel concludes that, with the lifting of the plague and the quarantine, the citizens return to their quotidian lives, but the spectacle of this terror, embodied in the complex

72 cf. Djemai, Camus à Oran. See also Connor Cruise O’Brien, Camus (Fontana, 1970), p. 47.
73 This narrated performance is also striking in how it almost perfectly echoes Artaud’s devastating 1933 speech on his dramaturgy at the Sorbonne, famously recounted by Anaïs Nin. Artaud became increasingly erratic in his performance, before collapsing onstage, as he presented his ideas on, fittingly, “Le Théâtre et la peste.” All but a handful of members of the audience crowded out of the room, rather than reflect on what Artaud saw as their own corpse-like existence. Here Camus cleverly inserts Artaud’s earlier performance of his ideas on Le Théâtre et la peste into a novel employing Artaudian dramaturgy and the plague as symbol.
symbolism of the plague, has acted upon the reader of the novel, who in the end, addressed by the narrator, is reminded the plague can always return.

According to Quilliot, Camus chose the image of the plague as early as 1939 for *La Peste*, under the influence of Melville—whom Camus had read while drafting the work. Its subject was the Nazi infection of Europe—albeit set in French Algeria. Quilliot writes, “on a higher level, Oran bursts out of its own limits. We have France and all of Europe under the Nazi boot, a vast concentration camp.”

In a response to Roland Barthes, Camus wrote that he wanted the symbol of the plague to be read on many levels, though obviously including the struggle of European resistance against Nazism. Compared to *L’Étranger*, *La Peste* marks, without any discussion possible, the movement from an attitude of solitary revolt to the recognition of a community in which one must share in the struggles.

In the novel, isolation camps are set up by the administration; families are separated from the dead, parents from children, and solitude becomes a general condition for all, from which they reconstitute themselves in a collectively-shared abjection.

*La Peste* is a remarkable novel that simultaneously presents itself as universal in its relevance, specific in its allegorization of the Occupation, set in

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75 Quilliot, *The Sea and Prisons*, p. 137.
colonial Algeria, and echoing settler myths of an existential threat, destitution, exile, and social regeneration.\textsuperscript{77} If an anti-fascist stance in \textit{La Peste} is clear, it is also obvious that Camus had set the action of \textit{La Peste} in Oran with its own historical specificity of ultra-right parties. It was not only the banality of settler life that Camus opposed (as he had in “Le Minotaure ou la halte d’Oran”), but also the rootedness of their ultra-right politics. As much as Camus would remain eternally devoted to French Algeria, he was opposed to settlers’ anti-Semitism and political reaction.\textsuperscript{78} In a colony already notorious as a bastion of support for the ultra-right Parti Populaire Français and the Action Française, Oran was its epicenter, with the anti-Semitic Union Latine proliferating among the settler community, whose program was to unify the Latin races against the supposed Jewish or Muslim threats.\textsuperscript{79} Caligula was a Latin figure whose spectacle of terror ends in a transcendant liberation for the audience. \textit{La Peste} is set in the ultra-right Oran, its settlers devastated by death and destitution. In these works, Camus subverts many of the claims to community by the ultra-right—by taking their visions to their nightmarish extremes. And yet in both cases, the residual referent, purged from these narratives, remained Algerian Muslims—whose own destitution would be eerily mimicked by the settlers in Camus’ works.\textsuperscript{80} It is in

\textsuperscript{77} In his analysis of Camus’ \textit{Les Justes}, Dominick LaCapra has explored this doubled signification between Occupied France and colonial Algeria. See LaCapra, \textit{History and Memory after Auschwitz.}
\textsuperscript{78} Roy, \textit{Camus}, p. 616.
\textsuperscript{79} CAOM 9 H 49.
\textsuperscript{80} Camus also seems strangely to have ignored the vibrant theatre scene among indigenous Algerians in the 1930s. See for example, \textit{La Voix Indigène}, Jeudi 28 janvier, 1932.
this initial context that Camus, a partisan of the Front Populaire, sought to use the terrorizing strategies of Artaud. He utilized them in order to help fabricate an idealized settler people, embodying ‘universal’ French or Western values, purged of their complaisance and reactionary politics by a reign of terror as spectacle. But he effected this by retaining all the founding myths of settler society, of destitution and exile as strategies for assembling a new basis of settler identity—one that still avoided questioning the fundamental injustice of colonial conquest and occupation.

John Erickson examines the depersonalization of Algerians in Camus’ work, but only in passing notes that works like La Peste seek to create a sense of community in the face of collective destitution. Camus was clear about his own intentions: “there was thus no more individual destiny, but a collective history that was the plague, and feelings shared by all.” His creative solution was to employ Artaudian strategies as an aesthetic means to reshape a people, with a universal problem requiring universal solutions—for the West against a terrorizing enemy. La Peste can be fruitfully read as a metaphor for the Nazis, but, as with the pre-war versions of Caligula, such an easy correspondence is more troubling considering the positive role the plague plays in creating solidarity and truth in a society that has forgotten its values.

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82 Camus, Théâtres, p. 1355.
Azzedine Haddour has brilliantly examined how the material conditions, existing among Algerians when Camus began writing *La Peste*, in Oran and Algeria, are transposed both upon European settlers as a mythic plague and upon Europe in a crisis of Western Civilization as Nazis. Camus, as reporter for *Alger Républicain*, was well aware of the immiseration of Algerians in the colony. If *La peste* is a critique of contemporary politics in Europe and Algeria, it also strangely mimics Camus’ own awareness of Algerians’ immiseration: the waves of pestilence, products of the series of famines which Camus in his journalism writes were “ever the scourge” devastating Algerians; their mass imprisonment and quarantine; the rise of anticolonial nationalism in opposition to a foreign threat. In *La peste* he would present a spectacle of a European population in Algeria terrorized by Oriental infection and then quarantined, subject to draconian laws and systematic destitution; but these images mirrored the concrete realities of colonial rule for many Algerians, who navigated their personal experiences under the regime in varied ways.

**A State of Siege**

Camus’ excision of the last lines spoken by Caligula in the same-titled play had helped turn it into a less ambiguous, if less coherent, struggle against a

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83 Azzedine Haddour, *Colonial Myths, History and Narrative* (2001). Haddour examines how the metaphorical destitution of *La Peste* displaces the actual destitution and disease experienced by Algerians around Oran at the time Camus was there, onto the settlers in his novel.

84 Camus, *Essais*, p. 944.
despot. This is precisely how Camus embodies the plague in his post-war collaborative play L’État de siège, set in Spain, which he worked on with Jean-Louis Barrault, another dramatist influenced by Artaud. As in other plays, he attempted to synthesize ballet, mime and song in the drama—along with the strategic use of discordant sounds and music. In the staging of L’État de siège, the plague was a character with little, if any, ambivalence. The actor portraying him even wore a swastika to make the connection between plague and Nazism explicit. Against this terror, the city’s administration is either ineffectual or collaborative, as in La Peste, and it is only the Mediterranean Sea that can rid the city of the plague—however it is from the sea again that the plague arrives—a confrontation with death that purifies its people. Here Camus bifurcates the doubled Artaudian meanings of the plague, as terror and liberation, and isolates them, respectively, on a Hitlerian antagonist and the Mediterranean Sea. The sea’s purifying winds signify the turning point in the play, when common resistance to the foreign infection is realized. However, again, it is from the sea that this plague arrives. These pluralities of plagues that Camus explored, in Caligula, La Peste, L’Etat de siège, act to transform a people—both the fictional characters and the audience immersed in Camus’ theatre and fiction. The extreme violence and destitution first makes them realize their absurd existence, and then moves them towards a collective solidarity.
The Contagion in France

As a Front Populaire militant in Algeria, Camus had urged artists to counter the ultra-right politics of the time; as for himself, he turned to dramaturgy, and Artaudian techniques in particular, as part of his prescription for the social transformation and regeneration of settlers. This collective solidarity was forged in the spectacle of a terrorizing destitution. He developed these techniques in the context of the culture wars of 1930s colonial Algeria; but he brought them, and his preoccupation with regenerating society across the Mediterranean to war-time France. Camus was initially uncomfortable and lonely in Paris under its gray skies and streets. He felt Paris was over-civilized and too refined, though he gradually came to see himself as French. He imagined himself living among the French workers, and seeing the destitution of people under the Occupation, “those French faces and silhouettes I shall never forget,” faces he witnessed from the windows of the train he regularly took between Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and Saint-Étienne. In the midst of war, he wrote that “all the French look like immigrants,” exiled in their own country, like the Oranois in his novel La Peste. For Camus, this strange nomadism and abjection, the image of exile within one’s own nation, that paradoxically constitutes the nation in a Barrèsian fashion, was also how he would narrate the origin of the Algerian
settlers’ shared identity, as they arrived to Algeria in his unfinished Le Premier Homme.  

After the war, with Caligula finally performed, and as he finished La Peste, he would continue to write about Algeria in his fiction and journalism, as he also developed arguments about the threats of terrorism and totalitarianism that would culminate in L’Homme révolté. He prescribed an international movement against terror and repression in the collection of essays published as Ni victimes ni bourreaux. As in Caligula and La Peste, he argued that “we do not cure the plague with means that apply to ills of the mind. A crisis that tears apart the entire world must be solved at a universal scale.”

He also explored the phenomenon of French racism in an article for Combat in 1947— the same year as La Peste was published—that he titled “La Contagion.” Here Camus uncharacteristically compares the French “colonial problem” to Nazism. He frames his discussion of French racism by presenting it as occasional, and crucially a contagion, to French virtue. The contagion of racism is one who signs may or many not be “spectacular.” Yet the examples he gives undermine his argument: the certainty that one is liable to happen upon a Frenchman who finds the Jews “really exaggerate,” and condemns their sticking together, even if, as Camus rebuts, “this solidarity was taught to them in concentration camps”; femicides in the French countryside that the gallic husband blames on the mysterious ‘sidis’, i.e.

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85 Camus, Notebooks, 1942-51, pp. 23, 25.
86 Camus, Essais, p. 347.
Arabs; ‘spontaneous’ torture chambers at Fianarantsoa; and the only recent apparition of collective punishment in Algeria in the wake of what has become known as the Sétif and Guelma massacres (an interpretation that manages to elide the long legacy of systematic oppression, torture, and mass-murder as French policy in Algeria).\textsuperscript{87} These events, whether real or spectacular signs of the contagion of racism in France, are forces of oppression that produce solidarity in its abject victims excluded from the nation, but produce indifference to the French citizenry, who, echoing the Oranois of \textit{La Peste} “register the news with the indifference of people who have seen too much. Nevertheless, the fact remains, we have done that for which we have reproached the Germans.”\textsuperscript{88} He designed his theatre of ‘virtual terror’ that it might provide a collective sense of destitution which would be a starting point to refashion his settler or French audiences against nihilistic indifference to political reaction. But he acknowledged in this essay that it was only among people coming together against metropolitan or colonial persecution as Jews or colonized Algerians, outside his own theatre of cruelty, that these lessons were learned. Here Camus reveals many of the ambiguities of his own political positions and aesthetic strategies: the tension between constituting European people through an aesthetics of terror and revolt, and curing them of their racist infection. It was in part this European indifference to others’ suffering that Camus sought to shake in his own theatres of cruelty.

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Ibid}, p. 322.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Ibid}.
And yet for Camus, this required the spectacular terrorization of his audience by an inhuman enemy. This amorphous enemy would in so many instances eerily signify the very recipients, Algerians themselves, of the real suffering and terror to which so many French or settlers were indifferent.

A few years after *L’État de siege*, in his 1954 essay “Terrorisme et répression,” Camus reworked his dramatic image of a people under siege but here in a discussion of colonial Algeria—in this case, of settlers ‘under siege’ by Algerian terrorism rather than Spaniards facing fascism. In this essay, he unequivocally condemned collective punishment against Algerians, as this was “a totalitarian principle,” and elsewhere would work against the French execution of political prisoners. However, it is worth looking closer at how he narrated the fate of the settlers in what he called in a sub-heading “The Tragedy of the Besieged.” Mohammed Lakhdar Maougal reveals the strange set of reversals at play in his political writings on the War of Independence:

Camus spoke of the settlers who had become the besieged, a strange image right out of the middle ages, but quite revealing, nevertheless—and an image to keep in mind. Owing to this artifice of rhetoric, Camus constructed an argument in which the Arab terrorist became an assailant and the settler the besieged. This subterfuge was to serve from then on to invert the logical and real nature of history, making of the Arab, the Algerian, even in his own native land, the aggressor and besieger; whereas, after all, it was the colonist who was the invader.89

Conclusion

Settler myths in Algeria, even before Camus adapted them, were fashioned according to a logic of destitution and regeneration. These were myths of a people who shared a confrontation with exile, immiseration, and of a terrorizing, and dehumanized, enemy—an enemy so often signifying the indigenous Algerians who were in fact much more likely the ones experiencing dispossession, immiseration and terror in the colony. Using Artaudian techniques, Camus adapted and intensified these settler myths of destitution and existential threat as ways of reconstituting society against its reactionary political culture, whether in Algeria before the war, or in France during and after. But the myths he employed, in this inoculating theatre of cruelty, often ended up repeating the terror of a dehumanized enemy—an enemy that would in so many cases signify Algerians once again. His particular appropriations of Artaud’s dramaturgy maintained and repeated a number of colonial myths that contributed to the colonial order: from his celebration of the myths of a virile settler people forged in destitution and struggle, to the appropriation and displacement of the colonial realities of Algerians upon the settlers themselves. In *La Peste* he would present a spectacle of a European population in Algeria terrorized by Oriental infection and then quarantined, subject to draconian laws and systematic destitution, which mimicked the concrete realities of colonial rule for many Algerians. Camus’ settler character in *L’Étranger* is transformed through two related acts of violence that conclude each of the sections of the
novel. The first is in an act of extreme violence against an Algerian who is little more than an apparition, the second is through the settler’s embodiment (or appropriation) of the destitution and solidarity of imprisoned Algerians themselves. As much as he sought to purge settlers or the French of their racism, he would not refuse the colonial myths that constituted his people and his own oeuvre: myths that in constituting a settler people through terror, justified the colonial occupation of Algeria.

As much as he sought to purge settlers or the French of their racism, he would not refuse the colonial myths that constituted his people and his own oeuvre: myths that in constituting a settler people through terror, justified the colonial occupation of Algeria.

Asked why he had joined the Resistance during the war, Camus had replied: “it seemed to me, and it still seems to me, that you cannot be on the same side of concentration camps. I understood then that I hated violence less than the institutions of violence.”90 In his writing on World War II, Camus would describe his resistance as part of an ethical struggle against the “institutions of violence.” If he could never be on the side of the concentration camps, it could only be through an act of refusal in the face of history—in that France had previously in the nineteenth century, and would later during the War of Independence, intern hundreds of thousands of indigenous Algerians in concentration camps, initially as part of a strategy of conquest, and later as a strategy for retaining its hold on its most precious colony. In his assessment of Camus’ own equivocations regarding Algerian independence, Hocine Aït Ahmed pointed out “massacring

90 As quoted in O’Brien, Camus, p. 33
with armored vehicles and planes is no less condemnable than to kill with a bomb or pistol. It is the ‘plague’ and cholera.”

As an engaged intellectual in Algeria, Camus had attempted to refashion his people: to both unify them and purge them of reactionary politics. In this endeavor, he employed Artaudian strategies of terror and cruelty, with the artist as Promethean shaper of this people. These were a people whom he argued, thus shaped by his works, would be devoted to a Mediterranean solidarity. And indeed, these dreams, of a people never yet constituted in reality, and late to arrive, finally seem most realized in the fantasies of exilic settlers who arrived in France at the end of the War of Independence, whose reality finally caught up with Camus’ fantasy of destitution and exile, constituting them together as a people, if only in retrospect, for a nostalgic fantasy of missed opportunities.

Debates as to whether Camus was a committed anti-fascist with a timeless message that remains always relevant for a new generation threatened by terror, or whether he was a colonialist who contributed to cultural fantasies justifying an

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92 On the repatriated settlers in France, see Yann Scioleto-Zürcher, “Faire des Français d’Algérie des métropolitains,” in *Pôle Sud*, number 24, 2006. 15-28. Scioleto-Zürcher emphasizes the remarkable dedication and efficiency with which the French state repatriated and integrated settlers in France. The story for Algerians who fled to France, however, was generally quite different. According to Sylvie Thénault, “from the insurrection of 1871, led by El Mokrani in Kabylia, all the way to the demonstrations of May, 1945, revolts punctuated the history of colonial Algeria, contradicting the image of a pacified country, forged after the fact, in the nostalgia for a lost time. Rather than a history of three periods, from the conquest to decolonization, passing through a period when a colonial order reigned, its history is that of a conquest never achieved, that had to be reaffirmed and maintained with each new insurrection. From the point of view of the French, the Algerian war of independence even took on the allure of a reconquest.” Thénault, pp. 31-32.
unbearable injustice, continue and will likely long continue among Anglo-American scholars of Camus. Insofar as he was capable, he sympathized with Algerians, but certainly chose to identify much more with settlers, and much less with Algerians, than had other settler intellectuals like the poet (and later president of independent Algeria’s first union of artists and writers) Jean Sénac.

The polemics about Camus’s relevance show no signs of abating, after decades of invocations for a timeless and always untimely Camus, whether during the Cold War or the present “War against Terror.” These polemics cannot be reducible to the ideological positions or political allegiances of the scholars alone, but are, I would suggest, also because Camus’ work is fundamentally ambivalent. He challenged fascism and settler reaction, but in works saturated in settler myths of exile, destitution, and social reconstitution against a faceless and existential enemy. That Camus did not challenge these neo-traditionalist myths, but instead used them as part of his aesthetic program for reconstituting his audiences against political reaction, suggests how diffuse and profound these myths were, even among colonial myth-makers themselves. He called for universal standards of action in a time of crisis and dissolution. But the colonial myths Camus reconstructed using Artaudian dramaturgy were not incidental to this message— with nonetheless universal significance—just as Algeria was certainly more than just the setting of most of his works. The colony was more than a setting: it provided the myths that remain an occulted cargo carried within his writings,
destined for other shores. And this colonial contagion risks being inadvertently internalized in its reception in other settings and other times, closer to our own. We can choose to let Camus be less the timeless mythic hero, and more the complex, ambivalent, *specific* individual, all the while recognizing the remarkable aesthetic sophistication by which he explored so many of the paradoxes of his own Mediterranean identity.
CHAPTER SEVEN

The Lyricism of Destitution: Albert Camus’s Barrêssian Debt

“A writer defines himself by an incapacity, as well as a nostalgia, to melt into the anonymity of a class or a race.”
- Albert Camus, preface to Albert Memmi’s Statue de sel

“Rebellion, the secular will not to surrender [de ne pas subir] of which Barrès speaks, is still today at the basis of the struggle. Origin of form, source of real life, it keeps us always erect in the savage, formless movement of history.”
- Albert Camus, conclusion of L’Homme révolté

“[Grenier]: Your book [L’Homme révolté] is in the reactionary tradition of Maurras. [Camus]: Too bad. You shouldn’t fight against what you’re like. You have to say what you have to say. I’ve read Maurras, but he took everything from De Maistre, whose Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg is an extraordinary book… …I like my ideas on the left and my men on the right.”
- Albert Camus in conversation with Jean Grenier. Grenier, Carnets

Louis Bertrand is an intellectual who now appears all over the historiographical map—atomized in different studies as a colonialist, avant-garde, Catholic conservative, classicist, fascist, or regionalist, and yet repudiated almost everywhere today. Camus on the other hand, particularly in Anglo-American scholarship, has been appropriated again and again, in a series of overdetermined and reinforcing works, as the avatar of liberalism in the face of both terror and totalitarianism. Each of these writers was an iconic twentieth-century French writer; each was also widely regarded as the leading settler intellectual of colonial Algeria. Bertrand became one of the leading Fascist

intellectuals of France; Camus one of the most famous anti-Fascist writers. But both worked within remarkably similar frameworks—neo-traditionalist aesthetic-political frameworks dominant in settler society and whose origins lay in fin-de-siècle French avant-garde crises of identity.

It is worth looking a little closer at Camus’s relationship to neo-traditionalist intellectuals, focusing in on Camus’s debt to one neo-traditionalist icon in particular. His impact on Camus’s writing is difficult to miss, and yet strangely passed over by the vast majority of Camusian scholars: the profound influence of Maurice Barrès. It is not as if Barrès’s trace is difficult to miss: even if he was more circumspect in the post-war period about his debt to neo-traditionalists, Camus nonetheless freely admitted his earliest collection of essays *Noces* was inspired in part by Barrès; on the eve of the Second World War he defended Barrès from charges he was a proto-fascist and singled out the debt that writers on the Absurd owed to him; during the war he would recapitulate Barrès’s theses on identity and mimicry as the basis for anti-German struggle in his “Lettres à un ami allemand”; and in his most famous political/philosophical essay, *L’Homme révolté*, he actually concludes his work with a quotation from Barrès’s infamous 1904 preface to *Un homme libre* as being the source of inspiration for his generation’s struggle for order. These are not minor or marginal points of influence Camus identifies. However, to list these points of influence is just a starting point for understanding the complexity of Camus’s
works, and the ambiguities of the twentieth-century reception of neo-
traditionalist thought. Camus was not just a neo-traditionalist; he was also a
liberal and anti-fascist. This tension, of Camus as an anti-fascist neo-traditionalist,
is the subject of this final chapter. It is in the writings of Camus, in his
appropriations, subversions, recapitulations and elaborations of Barrès, that we
see the range and limits of the legacies of neo-traditionalism, this integral
component of modern intellectual culture of a Greater France. But if we are to
examine these neo-traditionalist traces in Camus, we must not lose sight that in
these writings, sometimes simultaneously, there are determined critiques of
Nazism, Vichy reaction, what he identifies as fascism in Spain and Greece, as
well as Soviet repression in Hungary. Camus is neither one nor the other, neither
neo-traditionalist nor anti-totalitarian liberal alone, but both simultaneously. And
again, we must contextualize the simultaneity of these phenomena in his work by
looking to his life and the trans-Mediterranean French intellectual subculture to
which he gravitated. The aim here is not to demonize Camus by way of
association, nor rehabilitate some of these neo-traditionalist sources: it is only to
understand the complexities and paradoxes, the strangeness and uncanny
familiarity, of this fin-de-siècle cultural legacy in the twentieth century — too
often quarantined as foreign to the idea of Western Civilization.

In the last chapter, we examined the ways in which Camus had organized
his dramas and fictions in their colonial and metropolitan contexts — how many
of these works show Camus using an aesthetic of terror as a part of his
mythopoeia for social regeneration. These myths had their origins in the Franco-
Algerian neo-traditionalist project, grafted from Europe, for fashioning a new
settler race on African shores. These were a set of myths that Camus displaced
back onto French society, and then have since been appropriated by Anglo-
American scholars and inserted, along with other aspects of his writings, into
debates about the Cold War and the “War against Terror”. Perhaps most strange
of all, in the last chapter we found in several recent invocations of Camus, from
both the critics as well as the champions of the “War against Terror”, that what is
most praised in their invocation is his power of myth-making for masses in a
time of crisis. This strange legacy of a trans-Mediterranean neo-traditionalism,
now expressed in trans-Atlantic scholarly and intellectual writings from a variety
of political positions, is explored more fully in the conclusion.

In the last chapter, we looked to Camus the dramatist. In this chapter, we
focus on Camus the essayist, and continue unraveling the ways in which he was
constructed as the privileged voice against terror and totalitarianism during the
Cold War. In the last chapter, we examined how Camus’s avant-garde aesthetics
of terror related to his role as a settler intellectual immersed in neo-traditionalist
fantasies of a new Mediterranean colonial race. This chapter, we examine his
complex and often contradictory relationship to neo-traditionalist sources
themselves. Camus drew from a range of sources, but a surprising number of his
works draw heavily from intellectuals who are commonly assigned by contemporary scholars to be anti-liberal, totalitarian proto-fascists or fascists: Georges Sorel, Oswald Spengler, Charles Maurras, Louis Bertrand, Charles Péguy, and more than any other, Maurice Barrès. Like his aesthetic-political writings on terror, Camus’s relationships to these ideologues of totalitarian ideologies, and in particular Barrès and his model for social re-constitution, are complex. Camus’s work is much more ambiguous and sophisticated than is usually supposed. His is an anti-fascist neo-traditionalism, or a liberal vision of a Western Civilization seen through an aestheticized lens of palingenetic or regenerative colonialism. As with his dramaturgy, a series of complex and contradictory relationships with neo-traditionalism are evident in many of his most famous essays, which draw upon his formation as a settler intellectual and his Mediterranean itineraries between colony and metropole.

Camus’s anti-totalitarian works, such as *L’Homme revolté*, were shaped by neo-traditionalist ideas, both in their form and content. This conjunction seems paradoxical because of the ways in which critiques of totalitarianism were developed during the Cold War, the ways in which neo-traditionalist intellectuals were purged or purified after the Second World War, and the ways in which Camus’s complex and multivalent works have been simplified by many hagiographers as well as critics seeking to reconcile these works within current models of fascism or colonialism, that were in fact much more fluid at the time.
than some more abstract definitions might suggest—at least as experienced and expressed by intellectuals like Camus. In other words, the reasons an anti-totalitarian neo-traditionalism might seem paradoxical is due to the fact that Cold War interpreters of Camus, putting his work into service against the totalitarianism he himself explicitly opposed, have obscured the underlying structures and tensions of his works, in which Camus, rather than being approached as the multivalent figure he was, is instead assimilated to the socially regenerative spectacle he helped shape.

**Camus, Neo-Traditionalism, and Misrepresentations of Fascist Ideas**

Neo-traditionalism, as a fin-de-siècle set of concerns, eventually was amenable to some fascist organizations. It was important for some, though not all, of the most influential fascists in France, but it was also an important current in French letters generally in the colonial period. This was not due to a general fascist temptation among French intellectuals, but because of the success of neo-traditionalists in constructing modernist visions of Frenchness in the period of French imperialism: these were visions that were co-opted easily enough by fascist movements and intellectuals who imagined their fantasies best realized in these movements. So neo-traditionalist thought was amenable to fascism, but it had become an integral component of a broader cultural movement among French elites in this period who did not become fascist, and whose ideas did not
converge with fascism. As this chapter explores in more detail, reconciling neo-traditionalist concerns for decadence and regeneration with a professed liberalism or anti-fascism was not without difficulty for intellectuals like Camus, when so many of the most popular neo-traditionalist icons of French letters, like Maurice Barrès, were fixed firmly (and not unconvincingly) as proto-fascists, and when these ideas of social regeneration came with a certain political baggage. When these neo-traditionalist fantasies were displaced to the colony as a privileged site for redemptive struggle and social regeneration, these tensions might pass undetected to those who would quarantine the colony from discussions of fascist violence. Yet Camus was explicit that there was a slippage that existed between metropole and colony, between fascist regenerative fantasies and colonialism’s regenerative and purificatory fantasies. He believed this, and yet would refuse some of the implications he nevertheless asserted, a refusal that lay between his rejection of fascism and his loyalty to fashioning and defending the concept of a settler race in Algeria, a loyalty he came to displace upon his idea of France and Western Civilization.

This chapter argues that one of the most anti-fascist French intellectuals, Albert Camus, can clearly be seen in his own intellectual genealogies, affinities and programs, to be one of the intellectuals most thoroughly influenced by neo-traditionalist thought in the twentieth century—indeed one can most accurately call him a liberal neo-traditionalist. Aside from François Mauriac, he was also
more specifically one of the most Barrèsian of the anti-fascist intellectuals of the twentieth century. This is not to imply that neo-traditionalism was politically neutral and could be assimilated to any aesthetic or political program, but that its particular matrix of aesthetic-political concerns and strategies was amenable to a number of different positions, which may have shared certain affinities but were not synonymous with fascism. It was in the grey area between these two sites—of settler and fascist fantasies—that Camus would seek to delineate a vision of society that challenged the latter by championing the former—yet in Algeria there was no easy distinction between the two.

Artaudian dramaturgy was the key by which Camus unlocked his fantasies of social regeneration in the colony against fascism. A cultural history that is focused on the specificities and instabilities in an intellectual’s works as they occurred allows for a more profound and historical understanding of the fantasies that animated so many of the intellectuals of this period—fantasies which are too easily and ahistorically mislabeled or misunderstood. Uncovering

2 Harold Mah, in Enlightenment Phantasies, argues “Identities always involved to some extent an idealization of character, which meant that they were always to some extent phantasies. And when those phantasies, with their multiple, conflicting, and self-contradictory terms, were enacted, they often malfunctioned, setting in motion wayward urges and desires and producing paradoxical consequences. Problematic at their inception, phantasies of identity became increasingly more so through the nineteenth century…” Mah, Enlightenment Phantasies, p. 4. Mah situates the particular waywardness of these Enlightenment fantasies and their legacies within the context of late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century cultural, social and political history. With Camus’s writing we find an attempt to transform the identificatory impasse of a neo-traditionalist liberalism, or ‘rooted cosmopolitanism’ by his transforming this impasse into a positive set of principles: his particular brand of Mediterranean humanism. And yet this solution opens up a new series of problems, and because of his attempts to reconcile this impasse by being both thoroughly neo-traditionalist and thoroughly liberal at one and the same time, his attempts
Camus’s conflicted genealogies of influence in Artaud last chapter, and in this one in Barrès, helps illuminate previously passed over concerns that animated his writings, instabilities which are at the very heart of this liberal settler intellectual’s writings. In this chapter, we seek to uncover how Camus recognized and reminded his readers of what he saw as the similarities between republican imperialism and fascism, and yet nonetheless championed the former against the latter. In this endeavor Barrès’s writings provided him the conceptual tools to elaborate a vision of an eternal Mediterranean oscillating between salvation and reaction, between universal values and exclusivist violence. And it is in examining these affinities more closely that we find so many heuristic models of fascism, when applied at the individual level in this period, fall completely apart: because intellectual socialists, liberals, conservatives and fascists in this period shared so much as intellectuals publishing together, in La Nouvelle Revue Française and other iconic publications.

This Camus’s Barrèsian legacy elaborates Emily Apter’s excellent essay on the fundamental tensions within Camus’s works, here by exploring more closely his intellectual affinities and genealogies. It is between “his Barrèsian sense of pied-noir entitlement to Algerian soil and his status as privileged global citizen of a cosmopolis of letters,” that one finds the seeming paradoxes that animated this iconic French and settler intellectual. So now we must ask, how specifically was

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have been condemned to be misread since by many critics who have often only heard his work in a single pitch.

Camus Barrèsian, and how did Camus reconcile his commitment to Barrèsian models of social regeneration—in the colony and later the metropole—with his lifelong dedication to combating fascism in Europe?

French Intellectual Affinities in the Inter-War Period

Avant-garde intellectuals have often constructed themselves, and their ideas, according to the oedipal logic of affiliation and repudiation. They identify with other intellectuals, only to aver they surpass them, and thus stake a claim upon the affective loyalties of their readerships in an era of mass consumption. This has followed since the eve of the Dreyfus Affair and is a defining structural characteristic of avant-garde movements generally. Camus, like many of his fellow settler intellectuals, firmly believed in the crucial role that the Promethean artist played in shaping and reshaping the masses. And related to this belief, he, like many of these same intellectuals, thus assumed a position like that of a parvenu in relation to the artists and intellectuals preceding him. This was another neo-classicist crisis of mimicry and creativity of the fin-de-siècle avant-garde. The corollary to the belief that the autonomous intellectual shaped the heteronomous masses was that intellectuals themselves were parvenus in relation to those before them. Neo-traditionalist concerns were irreconcilable.

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4 See Renato Poggioli on avant-garde movements, particularly his discussion on the dialectic of movements, in chapter two of The Theory of the Avant-Garde, pp. 16-40. T.J. Clark observes, “The more we look at the artistic world in Paris, the more its schools and dogmas seem an artifice; what really mattered was the ease of transition from attitude to attitude, style to style, posture to imposture.” T.J. Clark, Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution, pp. 13-14.
tensions which provided a source of contestation and identification for French intellectuals seeking to delineate themselves from previous movements and influences in the modern French colonial period. One might as well herd cats as seek to fit intellectuals’ influences within exclusive political doctrines. For instance, Barrès was influential, in individually particular ways, on French intellectuals as divergent as François Mauriac, Pierre Bourdieu, Charles de Gaulle, Charles Maurras, Louis Aragon, and his ideas still implicitly circulate in discussions by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari on arboric and rhizomatic forms of knowledge, and more explicitly in Nicolas Sarkozy’s public pronouncements. One could be a French fascist intellectual who nonetheless refused the influence of Barrès. And Camus was an anti-fascist intellectual who submitted to it. Camus’s work is allied to Barrès’s writings in particularly fundamental ways at least according to Camus—these were ways by which Camus defined his own work as part of an intellectual genealogy and its place in the particular canon of neo-traditionalism so popular in his settler intellectual subculture.

Enzo Traverso has warned against undervaluing the influence of far-right intellectuals among European reading publics generally, not just among the far-right, in the inter-war period:

One often tends to forget them, out of a kind of retrospective overlap that hides the fact that Gramsci became a central figure of Italian

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5 See Emily Apter, Continental Drift: From National Characters to Virtual Subjects (University of Chicago Press, 1999); Paul Silverstein, “Of Rooting and Uprooting,” in Ethnography, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 553-578; Soucy, Fascism in France. Apter is one of the few recent scholars of Camus to have understood his profound barréssisme.
culture only after the war and the fall of fascism, that Maurras and Drieu la Rochelle were just as influential, in France in the 1930s, as Malraux and Gide, and that, under the Weimar Republic, Ernst Jünger was just as famous as Erich Maria Remarque, and Oswald Spengler was much more widely read than Walter Benjamin or Ernst Bloch.⁶

Bertrand, though since largely forgotten, was during his lifetime much more widely read as an historian than the entire Annales School (including fellow settler intellectual Fernand Braudel). Neo-traditionalists were remarkably successful in propagating their ideas in the public sphere, and beyond the strict political allegiance of a paramilitary Camelot du Roi, in no small part by intertwining their political programs to aesthetic theory: to their highly intellectual and combative literary, dramatic, or philosophical criticism. Maurras’s many publishing projects drew praise from writers as politically distinct from him as Proust and Malraux. But if some people in France and much of Europe were receptive to an aestheticized redemptive and regenerative vision of society, a vision of a new covenant with the land and nation, or a purification of the decadence of modernity, it was in the overseas départements of Algerian settler society that this vision was most profoundly felt among intellectuals. Camus’s earliest writings show a particular interest in, and influence of, neo-traditionalist thought, thought which structured settler intellectual movements generally. This influence does not make him remarkable among settler intellectuals, a fact which is a starting point for understanding his utilization of

neo-traditionalist ideas in his work. But his attempts to subvert it within a liberal framework are more remarkable, as they were with several other fellow settler intellectuals, including Gabriel Audisio. Jules Roy, who became one of his closest friends and confidants, and though he expressed a repudiation of the ultra-conservative racialism among many settlers after WWII, was in the 1930s a member of the Action Française in Algeria. In his memoirs he explained his political allegiances according to his allegiance to neo-traditionalist Barrès: ―I did not like the Jews and neither did anyone around me. Had Barrès been on the side of Captain Dreyfus? Zola yes, but Zola was considered to be a Neo-Frenchman and a decadent writer.‖\(^7\) Camus’s mentor Jean Grenier, professor at the Université d’Alger, himself a critic of the Algérianistes as well as dedicated against fascism and Communism, was nonetheless also influenced by, and an admirer of, Barrès.

Camus’s earliest writings, including his notebook entries, engaged with the requisite figures in inter-war French intellectual life: including André Gide, Henri Bergson, Maurice Barrès, André Malraux, Friedrich Nietzsche and Oswald Spengler: an ideological mixed bag weighted with a neo-traditionalist canon so familiar among his settler peers. Two men who exerted an early influence on him were his uncle Gustave Acault, and the Algiers professor who would become his life-long confidant, Jean Grenier. Camus, who came from a home without books,

would listen intently to his uncle as he regaled a steady stream of visitors to his butcher’s shop with talk of politics and literature. Acault took Albert under his wing as a youth, and besides teaching his polymath nephew to be a butcher, would provide him an early informal schooling. According to Camus’ biographer Lottman, Acault knew the nineteenth-century classics, was according to Camus a militant anarchist, but would nevertheless often quote neo-traditionalists Paul Valéry or Charles Maurras. Grenier, his teacher at the Grand Lycée d’Alger (the school where a young Bertrand had taught decades earlier), had helped direct his interest in art and literature. He was a philosopher and classicist, and a frequent contributor to the premier French literary journal of the early twentieth century, the neo-classicist *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. Camus found in Grenier one of his principal father figures, and corresponded with him for the rest of his life, in letters often anxious for praise—and on more than one occasion, would see Grenier’s criticism, or aloofness, as a slight. However, Grenier’s role in shaping him should not be exaggerated. With the prodding of Grenier, he attended the Université d’Alger, where his DEC thesis was on the subject of Plotinus and North African icon St. Augustine. Although Grenier is known primarily today by his relationship to Camus, he was a quintessential writer of that generation whose members, each borrowing from a certain reading of

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8 Lottman, *Albert Camus, a Biography*, p. 49.
9 Unsurprisingly in a colonial setting in which the European population sought to justify its ancient claim to the land, St. Augustine figured prominently in the discourses of Charles Lavigerie, Cardinal of Algiers, as well as Louis Bertrand.
Nietzsche\textsuperscript{10}, sought to fashion a Mediterranean system of values to oppose a decadent north—a disparate generation that included such politically diverse and multi-national figures as Nicos Kazantzakis, Jean Moréas, Gabriele D’Annunzio, Charles Maurras, Paul Valéry, Maurice Barrès, Louis Bertrand, Gabriel Audisio, and of course, most colonial writers of North Africa seeking to fashion a regional and integral culture for Algerian settlers.

\textbf{Camus and the Neo-Traditionalists}

A few scholars, such as David Meakin, Emily Apter, Fredéric Grover and Patricia Lorcin, have noted Camus’ affinities for intellectuals whose own aesthetic strategies would seem to be the subjects of his own critique of an aesthetics of force: Maurras, Barrès, Bertrand, Montherlant, Péguy, Drieu la Rochelle, and Sorel to name a few.\textsuperscript{11} In essays like \textit{L’Homme révolté}, these writers are not only isolated from Camus’s critique of aesthetic violence, a critique which is focused on figures like the Surrealists or Hitler, but neo-traditionalist intellectuals are also praised in many of his writings. The question is not whether Camus admired far-right figures. This question is not only incontrovertible, it is

\textsuperscript{10} Camus critiques Nietzsche along with Hegel and Marx as part of a German ideology in \textit{L’Homme révolté}. Yet his critique of Nietzsche is much more ambivalent than with Hegel and Marx. He told an interviewer with \textit{Les Nouvelles Littéraires} that he “places him infinitely above the other two.” \textit{Essais}, 1341.

not even remarkable: socialist, leftist and liberal intellectuals, such as Anatole France and André Malraux, praised Charles Maurras’s character and theses.\textsuperscript{12} Léon Blum admired some qualities of Maurice Barrès and André Gide was in many ways, as Camus himself pointed out, a Barrèsian in all but name. Communist Louis Aragon was one of the stronger post-war advocates of Barrèsian aesthetic-political strategies.\textsuperscript{13} The avant-garde was indeed a small and intimate world. That France, Malraux, Blum, Gide and Aragon were not fascists hardly needs to be said. Nonetheless, these affinities deserve closer scrutiny—not as a list of influences, not as a set of damning associations, but as a source of ideas that Camus adapted, sometimes subverted, sometimes was subverted by, according to his own particular needs at different times in his life—influences that were shaped by his self-appointed role as a settler intellectual, and in turn shaped his conception of what an intellectual was and should be. Likewise, just because Camus drew important components of his philosophy from figures like Sorel and Barrès, does not make their work any less important for figures like Mussolini or Maurras. Indeed, a discussion of ‘proto-fascist’ intellectuals is a

\textsuperscript{12} For a detailed discussion of the wide range of French intellectuals influenced by Maurice Barrès, see Grover, “The Inheritors of Maurice Barrès.”

\textsuperscript{13} “The reason for Barrès’ success, according to Aragon, is the very fact for which he is usually criticized: he has been openly a ‘partisan’. He has given a more vivid picture of his time than any other writer ‘because he gave politics the dominant place it has in the modern world, because for all practical purposes, he rejected the notion of ‘fictional distance’, he wrote about the event, using for material the very event in which he had been personally involved.’ The content of this political chronicle may be reactionary; its technique is avant-garde.” Grover, “The Inheritors of Maurice Barrès,” p. 543.
perfectly reasonable and necessary one, as long as the necessarily teleological nature of this discussion is understood.

Because of the associative or ad hominem logic that histories of intellectual affinities risk veering towards, it is worth re-emphasizing that it is the argument of this chapter that Camus’s affinities with Barrès do not—I emphasize do not—make Camus in any way a covert French Fascist intellectual, but they do reveal an almost entirely ignored, and yet crucial, set of aesthetic-political preoccupations that shaped this most famous of French intellectuals. And they do make current models of fascism which privilege a definition according to intellectual affinities, or ideological allegiance to a set of aesthetic concerns, and outside of individual or collective practice, more difficult to reconcile with a liberal Camus.

But reconciliation is precisely what Camus attempted to do through much of his later writing; he attempted, however successfully, to adapt neo-traditionalist imagery, neo-traditionalist intellectuals, and neo-traditionalist aesthetic-political strategies within a left-wing colonial, and post-war liberal framework, while displacing his settler fantasies into ones that would encompass a broader, though in many ways still exclusive, Western identity. In other words, Camus’s works are remarkable examples of liberalism and neo-traditionalism operating simultaneously in the same texts, as an attempted liberalization of a neo-traditionalist cultural framework. Camus did not repudiate these neo-
traditionalist influences on his own writing any more than settler society itself, even after the Second World War, when these ideas were purged from much of the French canon in something of an intellectual supplement to the Épuration. However he like many other intellectuals would later be somewhat more circumspect about these affinities. Camus’s writings show a continuous struggle to employ, identify and repress the reactionary imperatives of these neo-traditionalist influences as he sought to rework these fantasies of settler culture into something more progressive. These occulted neo-traditionalist influences are not merely curiosities of his youth he later renounced. That this neo-traditionalist trace has been so ignored or downplayed, considering the shelves of scholarly treatises on Camus, is itself worth a major study. If there is anything scandalous in these affinities, it is not that Camus was in some ways typical of his time among the subculture of settler intellectuals and their neo-traditionalist worldview, but that these influences, like Barrès, have been so often missed or occulted since in the massive output of Camusian scholarship.

“I like my ideas on the left and my men on the right.”

The work that is most often cited when discussing Camus’s liberal commitments in the face of twinned fascist and Communist threats is his most famous political and philosophical essay, if also one of his most eclectic: *L’Homme révolté* (1951). Although it has come to be seen as self-evidently opposed to both
far right and far left ideologies in most Anglo-American scholarship, this
interpretation, though true as far as it goes, also requires quarantining a number
of often passed over preoccupations of the text. Certainly, such a uniform reading
was not at all the way it was received at the time. The reviews for the work were
as wide-ranging, and combative, as the essay itself. Herbert Lottman observes
that Camus’ *L’Homme révolté* was not only praised by *Le Monde* but also by
*Aspects de la France*, journal of the reformulated post-war Action Française, which
proclaimed it a “healthy return to nationalism.” As Lottman put it, as with
Charles Maurras, Camus was seen to be “seeking order and duration.”¹⁴ In fact,
Sartre had himself decades earlier suggested affinities between Camus and
Maurras in his pre-war review of Camus’s *L’Étranger*, when this up-and-coming
settler intellectual was then nearly unknown in the metropole. In Maurice
Nadeau’s review of *L’Homme révolté* for *Combat*, he noted Camus’ Mediterranean
racialism. Francis Jeanson’s blistering review, “Albert Camus ou L’Ame
Révolute,” and the ensuing debate in the pages of *Les Temps Modernes*, would be
the last straw between Camus and Sartre. Jeanson saw the work as moving
Camus from the left to the right: “In my eyes, it all seems as if Camus is in search
of a refuge for himself, straining in advance to justify an eventual
‘disconnection’.”¹⁵ This work would only deepen the divide that had already
grown between himself and Sartre over issues concerning post-War French

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¹⁴ Lottman, *Albert Camus, a Biography*, p. 497. Lottman also observes that Maurice Nadeau’s
review in *Combat* noted Camus’s fixation on Mediterranean racialism. *Ibid.*
society, Communism and the so-called “Algerian question,” that is, Algerians’ struggles for independence. Sartre’s view of Maurrassian affinities with Camus’s early writing could be a (possibly deliberate) misreading on his part. And just because certain ultra-nationalists also identified with L’Homme révolté should not be taken to mean that the text was particularly open to such interpretations. But it was not just Sartre, and it was not just Action Française activists. And yet these interpretations have largely been excised from scholarly work on Camus.

L’Homme révolté was affectionately dedicated to his mentor and life-long friend Jean Grenier. He had even approvingly and appropriately cited Grenier’s more philosophically rigorous, though now forgotten, pre-war condemnation of Communism and fascism titled Essai sur l’esprit d’orthodoxie. Camus had been anxious about Grenier’s approval through much of his life, and had given him the manuscript to read. According to Grenier’s notebooks, after he had read it, Camus came to Grenier’s villa for his mentor’s assessment. Camus would be disappointed by the visit. Grenier also expressed to Camus his concerns about L’Homme révolté:

“[Grenier]: Your book [L’Homme révolté] is in the reactionary tradition of Maurras.
[Camus]: Too bad. You shouldn’t fight against what you’re like. You have to say what you have to say. I’ve read Maurras, but he took everything from De Maistre, whose Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg is an extraordinary book…”16

Camus’s response to his paternal surrogate’s assessment was strikingly nonchalant. He later went on to explain that same day: “I like my ideas on the left and my men on the right.”17 It is worth noting here that what Grenier recorded here in his notebooks is a testament to Camus that is distinctive from the one he more tactfully provided in his memorialization of Camus in Albert Camus: souvenirs.

*L’Homme révolté* is a broad-ranging work, which can of course be read and appropriated in any number of ways, by anarchists, socialists, liberals, conservatives and others, but it has been retroactively constructed in ways that distort its complexities, reduced most often either as a work of principled liberalism, often by Cold-War liberals and conservatives, or as a turn to the right by a writer formerly of the left, often by Leftists. This essay was not in fact a sudden turn to the right for Camus as according to his critics, but a work that repeated many of his ongoing affinities for these ‘men on the right’ that Camus had valued from his earliest days as a young settler intellectual, which had been, like his patrimony of colonial Algeria, never renounced. Indeed Camus’s Algerian patrimony was also a patrimony of these ‘men on the right’: as a settler intellectual, his vision of Algeria was neo-traditionalist. And it is in the representations of Algerian settler society dominant among settler intellectuals

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17 Grenier, *Carnets*, p. 112. I have only found Olivier Todd to have cited components of this conversation in his biography of Camus, but he excises most of Camus’s response cited above. The shift in emphasis means that the conversation appears instead to be about Camus willing to risk losing friends over publishing *L’Homme révolté*, and avoids any of the passages in which he identifies himself with right-wing figures. For a comparison, see Todd, *Camus, une vie*, pp. 543-4.
that we find the source of his neo-traditionalism, not among Algerian settlers
generally, but among its myth makers immersed in Barrèsian and neo-
traditionalist fantasies. Apter perspicaciously observes, “Barrèsianism was, of
course, a historic ingredient in the ideological confection of ‘L’Algérie Française,’
despite the fact that the very expression French Algeria is a contradiction in terms
according to Barrèsian principles of ecocentric nationalism.”18

For all the works that present Camus as a paradigmatic figure of the left,
and given his profound and avowed debts to Malraux and Gide, if one sifts
through the voluminous scholarship on Camus, a number of critics have
nonetheless pointed out morphological similarities or historical connections
between Camus and neo-traditionalists. David Carroll, who has written on both
Camus and Péguy, notes several points of commonality between the two,
particularly what he calls their shared celebration of “the civic virtues of poverty
and anonymity.”19 Jacques Hardré devoted an entire essay to Camus’s and
Péguy’s shared ideas and commitments.20 Camus’s longtime friend and fellow
settler Pascal Pia saw similarities between Camus’ La Chute and the works of
Drieu la Rochelle.21 John Stanley, in an essay seeking to inoculate Georges Sorel
from charges of Fascism, links him instead to Camus:

18 Apter, Continental Drift, p. 35.
19 Carroll, Albert Camus the Algerian, p. 227n.
21 Todd, Camus, une vie, p. 648. Drieu, according to Malraux and Pia, had pushed for the
publication of Le Mythe de Sisyphe. Ibid. p. 291. 
If we can make any comparisons of ‘Sorelianism’ with existing theories, it is not with Fascism but with Albert Camus’s ideas on rebellion, an act of refusal to existing repression, from revolution, which attacks the existing order with a plan for future organization and a theory of historical destiny.\(^2^2\)

Of course prior to the First World War Sorel was heaping praise upon a Maurrassian politics of monarchism and ultra-nationalism, and was publishing alongside Maurice Barrès. But Stanley is at least correct that Camus did indeed draw extensively on Sorel in his *L’Homme révolté*, and like many French readers, Camus appreciated Péguy. Patricia Lorcin’s excellent and award-winning essay on how classicism informed the conquest of Algeria, “Rome and France in Africa: Recovering Colonial Algeria’s Latin Past,” also observes a close relationship between the writings of Bertrand and a young Camus:

Camus’s “‘melting pot’ departs from that of Bertrand in that it appears to make room for the Arabs, but its true image reflects Bertrand’s concepts of the ‘‘Latin race.’”

Bertrand’s refrains are clearest, however, in Camus’s second work, the collection of essays entitled *Noces*, published in 1938 [published in 1937 in Algiers]. It is no coincidence that the opening essay of the collection is situated at Tipasa. Like Bertrand, Camus had a cultural awakening among its ruins.\(^2^3\)

Camus did not only discover his own roots in the colony and among the classical ruins he found there, but in the pages of prior colonial intellectuals’ inscriptions upon this land and its ancient monuments. His Algeria to which he remained

\(^2^3\) Lorcin, “Rome and France in Africa,” p. 326.
faithful was as much a conceptual literary space of settler fantasies as an actual geographic one of colonial realities.

_Noces: Camus’s early Barrèsian Style_

_Noces_, Camus’s first collection of stories, is a good place to begin in seeking to understand Camus’s intellectual debts. It is, as with his early poem on the Mediterranean, a creative if conventional neo-traditionalist vision of settler Algeria. And here we find Barrès’s influence not only apparent, but in post-war correspondence, avowed by Camus.

Where a Barrèsian influence on Camus has previously been acknowledged, it comes unsurprisingly from defenders of Barrès himself rather than champions of Camus. Camus serves the function in these post-war works of displacing the obvious Barrèsian inheritance of fellow anti-Dreyfusard Maurras onto a politically unimpeachable author, similar to John Stanley’s utilization of Camus to purify the ‘contamination’ of Sorel’s monarchist and authoritarian trajectory. These apologetic works were written in the wake of the Second World War and seek to achieve a purification of Barrès’s legacy with the benediction of Camusian influence—and thus serve to reconsecrate Barrès back into the national patrimony. Whatever their questionable and indeed obvious motives, these gestures are not without some purchase on reality. Michel Mohrt, historian, Académicien and one-time Action Française sympathizer (a set of descriptors
that covered many pre- and post-war Académiciens), wrote an essay translated and published in 1948 that draws out Camus’ intellectual debt to Montherlant and Barrès. Mohrt’s motivations in drawing out these connections may be suspect, but his careful reading is not:

It would not have been necessary to read this sentence in Noces, ‘There are places in which the spirit languishes and dies,’ to recognize in this sumptuous prose the influence of Barrès. This romanticism, this irony, this obsession with death and la volupté were already evident in Barrès of the Culte du moi.24

He then quotes an extended passage from Camus’ Noces, on how peasants come to resemble the olive groves of their land, as the faces of Giotto paintings resemble Tuscany: “the mixture of asceticism and voluptuousness, the resonance common to earth and man, in which man like the earth achieves reality somewhere between misery and love.”25 Meakin also notes Camus’ relationship to the works of Barrès and Sorel along with Péguy.26 Action Française acolyte Pierre de Boisdeffre’s analysis of Barrès’ legacy, published in 1951, attempts to isolate Barrès’ politics from his obvious literary skills (which were as Carroll argues however completely unified in Barrès’s works): “I remain faithful to Un homme libre, even if I must sacrifice all later works.” De Boisdeffre’s strategy in isolating Barrès’ literary greatness from his virulent xenophobia was lost on many contemporaries. However, De Boisdeffre highlighted less problematic

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26 Meakin, “‘Un classicisme créateur’: Charles Péguy and Albert Camus.”
inheritors by calling on contemporary authors, including Gide, Cocteau, and also Camus, to contribute their own thoughts on Barrès’ influence. Camus graciously responded. His correspondence with de Boisdeffre is by far the shortest response to the author and worth quoting in full:

1. Barrès exerted an influence on Noces and that is all.
2. Is his ‘actual discredit’ justifiable and durable? No. And anyway, there is no discredit.
3. What works should be passed onto posterity? All; except the works of his youth and his political texts.27

Like the defenders of Barrès, Camus also only admits Barrèsian affinities in his youthful writing.

This could have been the end of the story of Camus’s Barrèsian debt: young settler intellectual is immersed in neo-traditionalist ideas that were part of the subculture in which he matured; he moved to France and became a liberal anti-fascist. But is worth pausing a moment: this reply to de Boisdeffre on his early debt to Barrès came at a time when he was just about to publish a work—L’Homme révolté—in which he would explicitly affiliate his main argument with Barrès’s Un homme libre. There is more going on here than an early influence long since repudiated. In fact, Camus came to more strongly identify with certain aspects of Barrès’s aesthetic/political project of national solidarization even as he drew away from some of Barrès’s symbolist-inflected style. While Camus argues there is no discredit to Barrès’ oeuvre (possibly separating his aesthetics here), he

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believes it is not his *Les Déracinés* that should be purged, but his earliest writings, presumably including those prior to the 1890s when Barrès was, among other things, a dandy and decadent writer (ironically, Camus also dressed as a dandy in his early years in Algeria).\(^{28}\) Camus, like many intellectuals, was often contradictory in his own public statements and writings. Despite his public avowal of a Barrèsian influence “on *Noces* and that is all,” his statement conflicts with the paper trail of his writings from the pre-war period

*Barrès ou la querelle des ‘héritiers’: From Gidean Nomadism to Barrèsian Rootedness*

Camus’s notebooks are a good source for understanding his intellectual influences and his own development as an intellectual. Reading them against his essays and how his ideas developed over time clarifies many preoccupations of these texts which can otherwise be easily passed over. But one still needs to be cautious in using them uncritically. One of the problems dogging studies of Camus is that he was notorious for scattering his correspondence, even burning it. Camus’ notebooks, with pages missing, should also be read cautiously, for they are in part notes to himself, and in part a performance of becoming an intellectual that were later realized by having them published for readers—the publishing of personal journals and notebooks has its own intellectual genealogy

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\(^{28}\) On Barrès’ early bohemianism, see Seigel, *Bohemian Paris*. 393
including those of Valéry, Gide and Barrès. And Camus’s own recollections are
often paradoxical, for instance the conflicting accounts of his experiences in the
Communist Party, as well as his relationship to other Franco-Algerian writers.29

His notebooks reveal Camus already early on attempting to both
assimilate and transcend the writings of previous intellectuals—and thus situate
himself among them. Just as Gide had sought to overcome the influence of
Barrès, Camus sought to overcome the weight of this doubled influence of both
Barrès and Gide on his intellectual subculture. In his early notes to himself, he
triangulated his own developing consciousness or performance as an intellectual
between these two, and sought to thus overcome them as his own man. He set up
in his notebooks the often-repeated binary between the nomadism of Gide, and
the rootedness of Barrès: “Barrès and Gide. Uprootedness is a problem we have
gone beyond. And when problems don’t interest us passionately we indulge in
less nonsense. After all, we need a native soil and we need travel.”30 These two
conceptual poles of identification, nomadism and rootedness, were often
repeated tropes and embodied as models for identity by settler intellectuals in
Algeria—these iconic poles contained between them much of the field of settler

29 In 1955, he wrote to Roger Quilliot, whom he had chosen as the editor of his works, that he had
left the Communist Party in 1935 after Pierre Laval’s visit to Moscow. This contradicts other
recollections from friends and colleagues, including Amar Ouzegane, letters to Jean Grenier, as to
some degree his position as organizer of the communist-led Maison de la Culture in 1937. Roger
Quilliot, The Sea and Prisons; a Commentary on the Life and Thought of Albert Camus (University of
Alabama Press, 1970), pp. xii-xii; Dominique Cellé, “Camus et le communisme,” mémoire de
maîtrise, Université Charles de Gaulle—Lille III, p. 5.
30 Albert Camus, Notebooks, 1942-51 (translated by Justin O’Brien) (New York: Alfred A. Knopf,
1965), pp. 5-6, 78.
identity as expressed not only in settler journals, but embodied in settler intellectual performances. For instance, writer Isabelle Eberhardt far exceeded Gide’s touristic nomadism. Her trans-European, trans-Mediterranean and trans-Saharan journeys, were celebrated by Barrès and Moréas as models of exoticism and classicism—not far from how she remains in contemporary Anglophone scholarship.31 Bertrand decentered Barrès’s notion of national rootedness (based in his Lorraine province) and replanted it on Algerian soil, as he made clear in his correspondence with Barrès. Each of these settler intellectuals, Eberhardt and Bertrand, were engaged in this dialectic of nomadism and rootedness, becoming and being, exile and settlement, which if part of a general condition of transnational identification, was condensed by Camus upon the figures of Gide and Barrès.

Camus’s choice of Gide and Barrès undoubtedly was also reference to the famous fin-de-siècle literary querelle that divided Gide on the one hand, and Barrès and Maurras on the other. Gide, an early acolyte of Barrès, rebelled

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31 See Barrès, “La Séduction de l’Islam,”; Jean Moréas writes of how her romantic literary style (in her descriptions of the Sahara) made him feel as if he were communing among Roman ruins. “Isabelle Eberhardt,” in Variations sur la vie et les livres (Paris: Mercure de France, 1910), pp. 255-61. For a perceptive demolition of the hagiography surrounding Eberhardt, see Julia Clancy-Smith, “The ‘Passionate Nomad’ Reconsidered: A European Woman in l’Algérie Française,” in Nupur Chaudhuri, Margaret Strobel (eds.), Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance (Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 61-78. “Most writers opine that Algerian Muslim society was more tolerant of Eberhardt because she had ostensibly embraced Islam, joined a sufi order, and dressed like an upper-class Arab man, which gave her access to male public and, particularly, religious spaces. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that Eberhardt had the weight of the French imperial system behind her—however reluctantly—when she entered sacred spaces normally off limits to Europeans of whatever gender and to Algerian Muslim women.” Clancy-Smith, “The ‘Passionate Nomad’,” pp. 66-67.
against this already aging Prince of Youth with a rebuttal to the latter’s ultranationalist Les Déracinés. Gide began his demolition of Les Déracinés in the opening piece of what would be known as La querrelle des peupliers: “Born in Paris, from an Uzétien father and a Norman mother, where, Mr. Barrès, would you like that I should root myself? I thus have taken to travel.” Gide’s opposition to Barrès was in some ways a reappropriation of an earlier Barrès, the decadent aesthete author of Sous l’œil des barbares against the xenophobic nationalist Barrès had become.

Gérard Genette observes that Barrès, once his politics awakened to reaction and nationalism, would attempt to reconstruct the significance of his earlier, more bohemian works (one’s with greater resonance with Gide’s writings) which he argued still lacked their full sense, and championed what he called an “egotistical nihilism.” Instead of rejecting these works, Barrès later diverted their meanings into a paratextual narrative, linked to his later nationalist works as a stage in the development of the Ego and its reintegration into the regenerated nation and region. This trajectory of course was Barrès’s own, now to be followed by his readers as the paradigm for moving from becoming to being, individual dissolution to national regeneration. So Barrès presented the egotistical nihilism manifest in novels like Sous l’œil des barbares as just a stage on

32 Gide, Prétextes, p. 45. In the original French, Gide writes, “…J’ai donc pris le parti de voyager,” in which he is also announcing his parti pris, opposite Barrès.
the way to the individual’s resolidarization into the nationalism of later works.

Genette explains that for Barrès,

…their pretended egotistical nihilism was in fact a first stage, like the doubt (or the cogito?) of Descartes. One must begin from the only certain starting point, which is the self. ‘I hear that you will speak to me of solidarity. The first thing, is to exist... instead take the Self as a place of waiting where you must hold yourself until an energetic person has reconstructed for you a religion.’

Gide indeed praised Barrès’ early more Bohemian styled works, since overwritten by Barrès within this paratextual process of nationalist re-racination. Gide found fault with Barrès’ writerly need to dominate the reader’s own freedom by forcing them into this aesthetic reconstitution within the nation, by subsuming every detail in his works to his general thesis: “Was it that these events were not eloquent enough by themselves? Was it that you feared that one was not thinking what you think? It is thus, perhaps, that if you had let free the reader’s spirit, they would have concluded differently?”

Gide, himself an early devotée of Barrès, here distorts his repudiated maître’s work, by bifurcating its narrative, quarantining only the conclusion (rooted national regeneration) to Barrès, appropriating the nomadic or nihilist journey of continuous becoming evidenced in Barrès’s early writings for himself as the antithesis of Barrès. Camus’s notes, in which he claims to have overcome the dialectic between Barrès and Gide, strongly supports Apter’s epithet of

34 Gide, *Prêtextes*, p. 47.
Camus as the “nationless regionalist.” She places him between cosmopolitan nomad and rooted settler, precisely the distinction he himself makes in his own notebook musings on Barrès and Gide. But Camus would return to this Gide-Barrès dichotomy, and reintegrate Gide into a Barrèsian genealogy of intellectual affiliation.

Camus revisited this triangulated relationship between himself and these twinned paternal intellectual influences in 1940. More specifically, he turned to the legacy of Barrès, on the eve of the Second World War, to defend him from criticism by Gide and others for his influence on the ultra-right. Although Barrès had died in 1923, a debate had ensued in the inter-war period, as to what he would have thought of the Nazis. André Gide was unequivocal: Barrès would have admired Hitler. Albert Camus entered the fray, and wrote a passionate defense of Barrès. On April 5, 1940, on the eve of the war, he published his defense of Barrès in the literary journal La Lumière. The article was titled “Barrès ou la querelle des ‘héritiers’”. In Roger Quilliot’s biography of Camus, and according to David Carroll who has written extensively on both Barrès and Camus, Camus is positioned as the opposite of the nationalistic Barrès. This is a strange assessment in particular by Quilliot, who edited Camus’s work, was perhaps the most knowledgeable of it, and yet elides Camus’ celebration of Barrès who Camus argues was influential both as “an esthete of patriotism as he

was of individualism.”

Here Camus begins his suturing the twinned components of Barrès’s aesthetic-political strategy of individual dissolution and national regeneration that had been ripped asunder and appropriated by Gide beforehand. Camus’ defense of Barrès argues that he had a twinned legacy: that which inspired the Action Française and Maurras, and that which inspired writers like Gide and André Malraux.

Gide and Malraux, like Camus, had briefly flirted with Soviet Communism in the inter-war period. Malraux was a great influence on Camus: he provided Camus the notion of the absurd, except that for Malraux, the condition of the absurd is produced by the alienation of modernity and the disassociation between West and Orient. For Camus, in contrast, the absurd condition centers on one’s encounter with death, annihilation and dissolution. Malraux was a writer of the absurd before Camus, but in this essay defending Barrès, and identifying him as paternal influence upon both Maurrasian and Gidean alike, Camus also suggests Barrès as the actual originator behind Malraux’s notion of the absurd, thus suggesting him as the absent father behind Camus’ own ethics. He states, “Barrès sees his values perpetuated in the absurd and magnificent universe of André Malraux.” To defend Barrès, Camus avers that whether Action Française writer Charles Maurras is a Barrèsian is akin to

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36 Albert Camus, “Maurice Barrès et la querelle des ‘héritiers’,” *Essais*, p. 1403
38 Camus, *Essais*, p. 1403
arguing whether Nietzsche was prototypically Communist or Nazi. For Camus, these arguments are teleological and puerile.\textsuperscript{39}

Camus’ defense of Barrès is quite clever, but counter-intuitive. According to Camus, Barrès was such a powerful writer of the individual, that of the two legacies, with Maurras’ Action Française on the one hand and Gide and Malraux on the other, the only true inheritor would be he who repudiated Barrès’ influence altogether, a statement which would become increasingly ironic for Camus in the post-war period: “Those who had been influenced the most would turn against him with the most violence—as if having first loved this solitary figure of royal race as he himself had proposed, they then reproached their creator for not resembling the spiritual son enough. I could cite at length André Gide.”\textsuperscript{40} This essay by Camus provides insight into his view of how his intellectual influences inter-related at least as he was coming to see them—all dovetailing out of this neo-traditionalist, regionalist and nationalist figure. What had prior been two youthful influences, Barrès and Gide, that he claimed to have surpassed, had now both become re-synthesized into an integrated Barrès as a suppressed source for his, Gide’s and Malraux’s works. As he moved towards maturity he claimed not the transcendence of these Barrèsian and Gidean settler

\textsuperscript{39} However, Camus would forget this deflection he used to support Barrès from charges of a collaboration avant la lettre when he turned to his intellectual history of the West in \textit{L’Homme Révolté}. There, he ties the Romantic disorder of Nietzsche to both Nazism and communism, as all coming from essentialized Germanic ideologies. All are opposed to Mediterranean order and balance. However, this deflection, conflating all these barbarisms together against the individual, also has strong Barrésian echoes. Camus, \textit{The Rebel}, p. 79, \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{40} Camus, \textit{Essais}, p. 1402.
poles of identification, but subsumed them both back into their neo-traditionalist point-of-origin, in what Genette identified as the Barrèsian narrative of national regeneration from individualist nihilism, or individualism and patriotism united again in social re-racination. This unity he sought in these intellectual affiliations would serve him well in the Second World War, when he would again borrow Barrèsian concepts of barbarism and rootedness, as part of his program for national regeneration in the face of an essentialized German barbarism. Camus, even as he subverted Barrèsian tropes representing settler Algerians, sought, in the face of Nazism, to appropriate Barrès in a patriotic work in the service, of all things, of anti-fascism.

**Letters to a German Friend: Barbarous Contagion as a Source for National Regeneration**

To give an example of how his work had adapted Barrès’s aesthetic-political models in the interests of anti-fascism, it is worth turning to his essays written during the war and unpacking some of the ways in which he called for national resolidarization. Barrès’s influence was not total upon Camus, but the lessons learned from Barrès were key components of his intellectual resources, learned as a settler intellectual, that he applied in different circumstances. In the midst of the Second World War, Camus, still a newcomer to France, editing and
writing for the clandestine *Combat*, wrote the epistolary “Lettres à un ami Allemand.”

The ‘letters’ to this German friend were in actuality addressed to a French audience (only the first published before the end of the war) — constituting them in the face of German aggression as they read along with one-half of a dialogue, whose reply Camus never details.⁴¹ In opposition to the German occupation of France and Europe, he calls France to action by using many of the neo-traditionalist and indeed Barrèsian tropes for social regeneration that defined Barrès in the eyes of Gide and other contemporaries in earlier intellectual *querelles*.

This seems at first glance a strange possibility. Camus was defending liberty against tyranny. In “Lettres à un ami allemand,” Camus, speaking on behalf of France, chastised his fictional German addressee for choosing blood over justice.⁴² However, in this call to action whose points often parallel his earlier social-democratic program of the journal *Méditerranée*, Camus sets up an opposition between a fascistic, inward-looking barbarism and a liberal, universalist Europe; each was exemplified, respectively, by Germany and France. And yet, as these essays unfold the latter also embodies the regionalist and neo-

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⁴¹ Camus’ appreciation for Malraux’ *La Tentation de l’occident*, in which a correspondance between a French and a Chinese writer reveals a Nietzschean opposition between the West and the Orient, may have been an influence on his stylistic choice of letters. Malraux, *Temptation of the West*.

⁴² This was a strange reversal of his later statement at his Nobel acceptance ceremony, where he famously stated on the question of the War of Independence, he would choose his mother over justice.
traditionalist values of his subculture of neo-traditionalist settlers. This true Europe, synonymous with France, comes to hold the values of the Mediterranean, and we see an early example of the slippages between his colonial humanism and metropolitan writings. European decadence, which as a younger man he had thought to be symptomatic of the French metropole as opposed to the vitalist colony, is now condensed upon Germany.

Here he presents a French nationalism that is “true to Europe,” opposing the perverse German ideology of Nazism. In the letters, he notably distinguishes the two nations by way of France’s loyalty to values of land and tradition. He patriotically argues that the Germans had turned away from the natural European relationship to the land. In uprooting themselves from this relationship, they chose injustice; they chose to be “among the Gods” according to their Nazi credo. Camus, speaking on behalf of the French, states, “I choose justice instead, to remain faithful to the land.”

Camus argues that an expansionist Germany had come to exemplify a perversion of Europe, by seeing Europe as a set of resources to exploit, which to Camus, still thinking of his settler experiences, is a result of them having turned inward when they had renounced African colonial conquest. Thus France’s imperialism, turned outward from Europe, had protected it from this internalized decadence so that it could retain its liberal values. So German colonialism turned inward had perverted a natural relationship to European land,
and had led to the atrocities of the Nazis. For Camus, Europe “is a land of spirit, where for twenty centuries the most stunning adventure of the human spirit takes place. It is the privileged arena where the man of the West struggles against the world, against God, and against himself.”\textsuperscript{43} The French, marshalling their anger at the barbarism of occupation, will surprise the Germans, but what makes the French distinct is that they are not given to excess, but are inheritors of European values—in particular classicist values of balance and order.

He pauses in concern that the French could, in their opposition to Germany, become horribly tempted to become German-like and unjust, lose their intelligence, become overly passionate, and pervert what Europe is, as exemplified by France. Camus momentarily fears that in opposing the barbarous enemy, one risks becoming them. But this risk of contagion is resolved by the same proximity that risks tainting the French, and here Camus employs the same aesthetic-political strategy evident in Barrès and Bertrand’s writings on France’s bastions: the logic of mimicry. The proximity of the enemy barbarian means the French, instead of becoming perverse like the Germans, will better define the essential differences between these peoples and resolidarize the nation: “If I believed in some fatalism of history, I would imagine that you are there by our side, divorced of reason, to correct us. Thus we renew our spirit, and are more at

\textsuperscript{43} Camus, “Lettres à un ami allemand. Troisième Lettre,” \textit{Essais}, p. 234. Camus explicitly makes the point that Germans renounced this ideal of Europe, “from the day you lost Africa.” \textit{Ibid.}
ease.” For Camus, in a passage strongly reminiscent of Barrès, the Germans exist as a mirror against which the French can define themselves, and thus remain committed to their specific, yet universal, values. Camus, bearing the flag of a French patriotism in the midst of the occupation, returns to a traditionalist and regionalist opposition between Germany and France, each defining the other along France’s eastern bastion. For Camus, France is the inheritor of what is essential and timeless about Europe, but crucially, its martial and expansionist energies had healthily turned outward to Africa, and thus in Europe, inward to individual balance.

The tensions existing between neo-traditionalism and liberalism were particularly difficult for Camus to resolve in the midst of the war—and tended to be applied according to different standards across his Mediterranean threshold. At the same time that Camus was writing a vigorous liberal critique of the overwhelming pro-Vichy politics of settlers in Algeria—which he again conflated with Nazism—Camus was also writing against France’s occupation. This doubled context also helps explain the plurality of contexts to novels like *La Peste*, an allegory of fighting European fascism set in settler Oran. He wrote against the French occupation, which he experienced first-hand, and against the Nazis, by importing to his vision of France neo-traditionalist settler fantasies of rootedness.

and xenophobic resolidarization he had tried to subvert in Algeria.45 Thus when criticising the Nazis and seeking to strengthen France’s defeated people, he set against Germany’s perverse infra-European imperialism France’s genius for extra-European conquest, and that the nation’s regeneration would be achieved through its proximity to, and opposition against, a phantasmatic barbarism at its bastions to the east. It is difficult to say with any real confidence how much of this neo-traditionalist gesture was a tactical calculation on his part faced with the exigencies of occupation, and how much it was Camus unconsciously turning to the often effective mythopoeia he had internalized while working in the settler intellectual subculture of his youth. His liberal and neo-traditionalist impulses jostled against one another in his 1940s writings—as they did for other intellectuals. But by the 1950s and in the early years of the Cold War, he would achieve a remarkable and brilliant synthesis of what can only be called a liberal neo-traditionalism, again with echoes of Barrès’s influence. It was achieved in the form of L’Homme révolté. Here he would transfer the colonial fantasies of an eternal regionalist Mediterranean, and essentialist French-German oppositions, as the basis, not for settler or metropolitan solidarization as in the 1940s, but for Western Civilization as a whole. Here the neo-traditionalist settler fantasies of his

youth were sutured into this narrative, and acted as the terminal point at the end of his liberal anti-totalitarian narrative.

*L’Homme Révolté: Regenerating an Eternal Mediterranean*

Rather than focus on political passages in *L’Homme révolté* divorced from the extensive discussions on aesthetics, Deberati Sanyal argues that *L’Homme révolté* provides a necessary and timely account of the aestheticization of terror: “This recurrent imbrication of esthetics with politics in Camus’ account of terror casts an intriguing spin on Walter Benjamin’s reflection that the estheticization of politics is one of the most seductive and powerful ploys of totalitarianism.”46 Yet Sanyal reads *L’Homme révolté* as a critique of an aestheticizing politics, and ignores Camus’ own explicit call for artists to shape a politically threatened western civilization by their own artistic work—he in fact argues for a fashioning of autonomous individuals heteronomously by a regenerating, promethean decree.47

If his earlier essay *Le Mythe de Sysiphe* was about an individual’s revolt in a confrontation with death, *L’Homme révolté* was a work in which he confronted a Western Civilization with its own collective dissolution, and hope for its

regeneration in a collective revolt. Camus’ essay opposes the forces of nihilism, revolution and history against a collective classicism. In his narrative, he writes a brief history of revolutionary excess and totalitarianism, traced back to the French Revolution, with its “assassins” of the monarch, and German idealism, wedded to a critique of modern art since Romanticism. This is a strikingly neo-traditionalist set of foci in the essay. He would critique the unmeasured absurdity of artistic movements like Romanticism and Surrealism, and their complicity in producing a revolutionary nihilism expedient for political totalitarianism, though he was not without some sympathy for some of these artists. After a bleak and terrible journey through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, paying special heed to both German abstraction (which subsumes Marx and Nietzsche into its broad and xenophobic portrait) and French Romantic and modernist aesthetics, he ends his essay with a hopeful chapter entitled “La Pensée du Midi.” The thought of the ‘Midi’ signifies both the meridian and noon, a stable point in space and time, as well as the regionalism of the French Mediterranean. Camus’ solution is for a creative classicism to reconstitute the West, now facing aesthetic degeneracy, revolution, and barbarism. This work is not only a neo-traditionalist work, but it manages effectively to light upon the particular neo-traditionalist narratives of the nineteenth and early twentieth century that would have been quite familiar to the monarchist, anti-German, anti-Romantic neo-classicism of
Pierre Lasserre (the Action Française writer whom Camus in his youth had criticized for being too rationalist).48

In *L’Homme révolté* he recounts what is remarkably close to a canonically neo-traditionalist narrative of nineteenth- and twentieth-century politics and aesthetics. Camus’ political vision for the future of Western Civilization is a spirit of collective refusal, or rebellion, which takes the part of real realism. If [rebellion] wants a revolution, she wants it in favor of life, not against it. That is why she applies herself upon the most concrete realities, the profession, the village, where the self shows through, the living heart of things and of man. Politics, for her, must submit to these truths. To finish, once she advances history and succours the suffering of men, she accomplishes this without terror, if not without violence, and within the most different of political conditions.49

To which Camus brings up Scandinavian societies, “where trade unionism conciliates with constitutional monarchy and realizes the approximation of a just society.”50 Camus, inasmuch as he was influenced by Sorel, calls for a sort of pacific anarcho-syndicalist federalism, though in his case wedded to monarchical traditionalism.51

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48 A relatively youthful Camus had criticized Pierre Laserre by opposing him to Schopenhauer, an important source of Camus’s celebration of irrationalism. See his 1932 “Essay on Music,” in which he summons the familiar Symbolist icons Schopenhauer and Nietzsche for his study of music. Albert Camus, *Youthful Writings (Cahiers II)* (translated by Ellen Conroy Kennedy) (Penguin Books, 1980).


51 Camus frequently read as well as wrote as a neo-traditionalist. For instance, in his review of Simone Weil’s *L’Enracinement* (which has its own Barrêssian echoes) he wrote that Weil truly understood what the “secret” need of France was: “a return to tradition.” Here Camus lists the essential needs of “order, liberty, obedience, responsibility, equality, order, etc…” This review is, like others, a moment in which the neo-traditionalism of two authors who are seldom seen as
Revolutionary syndicalist Georges Sorel had a profound influence on Camus, particularly Sorel’s notion of the ‘social myth’, and Sorel appears sympathetically in the pages of *L’Homme revolté*. Sorel’s *Réflexions sur la violence* argues that the fabrication of a social myth, by a generation of propagandists, is necessary to constitute a group, be they “of a people, of a party or of a class.” This constituting myth will provide them a myth of indeterminate but “maximum intensity,” and without recourse to reason, a means to bring them together and “reform their desires, passions, and mental activity.”52 Meakin observes that for Camus

The expressionist revolt in favour of creativity had its counterpart—in certain respects—in the assault on decadence which in France unified the thought of figures such as Péguy, the political philosopher Georges Sorel, and even Maurice Barrès...[Sorel] emphasises the creative aspect of this new morality of the productive of art: art, he suggests, is a key to the revaluation of work, through the lessons of originality, innovation and inventiveness that it has to offer. The approbatory tone of Camus’s reference to Sorel in *L’Homme révolté* is due in particular to this aspect of his thought, which so closely anticipates his own preoccupations.53

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Camus would, in his conclusion to *L’Homme Révolté*, oppose the death-driven, rational, systematic, and history-focused ideologies of German idealism, Romanticism, fascism, Marxism, and anti-western fanaticism, once again to a timeless and life-affirming and masculinist Mediterranean. Camus writes:

> The history of the First International, when German Socialism ceaselessly fought against the libertarian thought of the French, the Spanish, and the Italians, is the history of the struggles of German ideology against the Mediterranean mind. The commune against the State, concrete society against absolutist society, deliberate freedom against rational tyranny, finally altruistic individualism against the colonization of the masses, are, then, the contradictions that express once again the endless opposition of moderation and excess which has animated the history of the Occident since the time of the ancient world. The profound conflict of this age is perhaps not so much between the German ideologies of history and Christian politics, which in a certain manner are accomplices, but rather between German dreams and the Mediterranean tradition, the violence of eternal adolescence and virile strength, between nostalgia, rendered more acute by knowledge and by books and courage reinforced and enlightened by the course of life—in other words between history and nature.54

*L’Homme révolté* offers a complex opposition set up between a stable and timeless Mediterranean identity, and a continually displacing series of opposing differences, connected like points on a terminal boundary surrounding this symbolic sea: German thought, Hegelianism and Marxism, Romanticism, the French Revolution... but for his notable repudiation of Christian politics as well, these were all the enemies of French classicist ultra-conservatism, and yet here transmuted into a liberal narrative opposed to Communism and fascism.

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54 Camus, *The Rebel*, p. 299.
But there is of course more going on in *L’Homme révolté* than a recapitulation of Sorel. Camus uses Sorel’s mythopoeisis not for revolution but in presenting his vision of a Mediterranean/Western man as the endpoint in individual revolt. This is not expressed in Sorelian terms, but astonishingly, by Camus citing Maurice Barrès. In his conclusion, he defines this collective revolt as “revolt, the secular will not to submit that Barrès spoke of.” To what secular will of refusal was Camus referring here and why was his notion of revolt so connected to Barrès, as he had prior to the Second World War connected the notion of the absurd to Barrès? In perhaps this central summative passage of his most famous work, a key passage defining revolt about which critics of Camus are often incurious, he is citing Barrès and more specifically quoting from his celebrated *Un homme libre* from his *Le Culte du moi*:

An I who does not submit, here is the hero of our little book. Never submit! This is the salvation, when we are faced by an anarchic society, where discipline is replaced by the multitude of doctrines, and when, over our frontiers, the powerful flood of the foreigner [*l’étranger*] comes, over the paternal fields, to confuse and sweep us along. *Un homme libre* has not provided the young a clear-cut understanding of their true tradition, but he has urged them to clear themselves and once again find their proper filiation.55

Even more astonishing, Camus is not citing the original text of *Un homme libre* from 1899, but its 1904 preface in which a by then far-right nationalist and anti-Dreyfusard Maurice Barrès sought to retroactively construct the meaning of his earlier book through the lens of neo-traditionalist nationalism and regionalism,

or what Robert Soucy and David Carroll argue is a proto-fascism. According to Genette, “The preface to the 1904 edition of *Un Homme Libre* pushes even further this maneuver in aligning *Le Culte du Moi* with the nationalist positions of *Déracinés*.”\(^5^6\) Carroll, using Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s definition of fascism in “The Nazi Myth”, concludes that “in this sense [Barrèssian nationalism] can legitimately be considered protofascist.”\(^5^7\) Even more strange, in his discussions of Barrès’s protofascism, Carroll actually cites this same passage (with it’s famous “Don’t submit!”) of the 1904 edition, the same passage that is cited for Camus. Carroll uses this passage to explain how Barrès’s “cult of the Self demands that all individuals subordinate themselves to their own filiation, the filiation of the Self that is the Self. In doing so, they will eventually discover their ‘authentic tradition,’ the culture of their region and nation, and the collective being underlying and forming their individual being.”\(^5^8\) For Carroll, this is a key to understanding Barrès’s proto-fascism. But this passage could almost be a perfect recapitulation of Camus’s conclusion in *L’Homme révolté*. This is uncanny, because Carroll not only cites this passage as key to understanding Barrès’s oeuvre, but Carroll, one of the foremost experts on French fascist culture never addresses any positive connections between Camus and Barrès. This is true even in his book on Camus, in which he cites *L’Homme révolté*. None of this of course makes Camus fascist at all. *L’Homme révolté* is opposed to state violence, and

\(^{5^6}\) Genette, *Seuils*, p. 262.  
\(^{5^7}\) Carroll, *French Literary Fascism*, p. 21.  
\(^{5^8}\) Carroll, *French Literary Fascism*, p. 24.
violence generally. This is a work that champions a collective refusal against revolution. But it shows the strange ways in which his anti-totalitarian narrative would so easily dovetail into a celebration of Barrès’s model for solidarization, based on Mediterranean settler myths, and Camus’s loyalty to his intellectual affiliations with neo-traditionalists. And it is through this set of filiations that he expresses a neo-traditionalist aesthetic-political argument against totalitarianism. Camus’s work can still easily be read as a liberal work of refusal against totalitarian ideologies, as it has been. This is not due to an act of hallucination by its readers. And yet he cannot help but express it using the key aesthetic-political strategies of both Sorel and in the end, Barrès, less often understood across the Atlantic in their profound impact on intellectuals from a variety of political positions. Both liberalism and neo-traditionalism, evident throughout Camus’s writings, were finally here perfectly reconciled, in a synchronous narrative that operates simultaneously as a liberal refusal against totalitarianism, and a neo-traditionalist invocation of transforming a public’s passions according to the precepts of a new classicism based on neo-traditionalist icons like Barrès and Sorel, and celebrating settler fantasies of a Mediterranean culture of moderation and order that was opposed to German abstraction and fanaticism. It was so

59 Camus’s notion of culture was one he drew explicitly from Oswald Spengler, which is evident in essays such as “L’Été en Alger,” “La culture indigène: la nouvelle culture méditerranée.” Each of these essays employs a distinction between civilization and culture that makes reference to his notebook entry on imperialism and Spengler: “Civilization against Culture. Imperialism is pure civilization. Cf. Cecil Rhodes. ‘Expansion is everything’—civilizations are islands—Civilization like the fatal outcome of culture (Cf.
perfectly wed, that the aesthetic-political architecture by which he constructed this narrative was all but invisible to its Anglo-American Cold War readership.

**Conclusion**

Camus adapted the immersive theatrical strategies of Artaud and the socially constituting aesthetic-political strategies of Barrès to fashion settlers against Algerians, French against Germans, and the West against Communism—all in avowed attempts to protect a fragile liberalism always at risk from reactionary ideologies. In his aestheticized reimaginings of these conflicts he attempted to reconstitute his people politically against reaction, while he sought to find himself reflected in this regenerated collectivity as a Promethean artist. But each opposition was defined by a strange mimicry and transference in proximity to the barbarous other—which, in the end, however universal he argued it was, excused French colonialism in Algeria: the settlers would become the innocent indigenous people in Algeria, opposed to the ‘foreign’ ideologies of Algerian anticolonialism; the French would oppose the Germans by refusing a nihilistic infra-European imperialism, and instead project themselves appropriately outwards to conquer Africa; the West would fight the imperialism of Communism and Nasserism by claiming the Maghrib as a battle zone.

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Some of these fantasies, particularly those of an eternal French Algeria, would dissolve in the end before Camus’ eyes; he died shortly before independence was finally achieved. In Camus’ spectacle of an Algerian colonialism, each side was a stranger to the other, and thus to themselves—reconciliation or resolidarization could only be produced in a spectacle of further abjection. But these settler fantasies, themselves grafted upon settler society from their original context in the fin-de-siècle avant-garde, still live on, if only as sometimes faint traces now, displaced in his writings onto the metropole and Western Civilization, and long since assimilated, often unrecognizably, into an Anglo-American context as well. Camus turned to reshaping the masses according to a new classicism to escape the impasse of settler society, but the sources he drew upon were often the same sources of the reactionaries he opposed, whose myths were the mould of settler fantasies that he would, like French Algeria, never refuse. Like earlier creative classicists like Winckelmann and Freud, Camus had his very own Rome neurosis, one that was like his work as a whole, ambivalent and ambiguous, which is perhaps a fitting place to end this study of Camus, who for all his fame is nonetheless one of the most underappreciated aesthetic theorists of the twentieth century, and one of the most misunderstood, perhaps even as he had at times been to himself. In an enigmatic entry in his notebooks, a trace of a lost dream, he had written: “I
dreamed that, victorious, we entered into Rome. And I thought of the entry of the barbarians into the Eternal City. But I was among the barbarians.”


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Neo-Traditionalism was a distinctive set of ideas, but it was not the property of an exclusive organization. Despite the origins of many of its practitioners in Symbolism, it was never the exclusive domain of a single art movement; and despite its employment by many key intellectuals of the far right, nor was it a political doctrine that could be ascribed to one particular point on a left-right spectrum. Whether it was called “neo-traditionalism”, “a classical renaissance” or Latinité, figures like Bertrand, Maurras, Mauclair, Barrès, Denis, and Gide promised a recuperation of past classical traditions through today and tomorrow’s Mediterranean expansionism, a national regeneration that would be constructed in a series of imitations and oppositions to internal and external foreign enemies. It was born of a specific period of French history: in the era of the “new imperialism” of the late nineteenth century; in the chauvinist revanchisme of the Third Republic; and with the increasing mobility, and the sense of social and economic precarity, among classicizing intellectual elites in a centralizing state.

Neo-Traditionalism was never hegemonic in French culture, both in the definitional sense no set of ideas is ever hegemonic and in the sense that there is as yet little evidence that these ideas permeated society as a whole beyond the published sources of these intellectuals. Neo-Traditionalism was less the trickling down of ideas from elites, and more the crystallization of ideas which they came across in a

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579 For Marxists who utilize the term, hegemony is supposed to be relational to class, not specific sets of ideas.
number of quotidian circumstances in Third Republic France, such as in class syllabi and tourist advertising, and by which they sought to reshape society.

But still, neo-traditionalism did permeate the writings of a number of groups and organizations of intellectuals whose ideas were then utilized by important political and publicity organizations in the metropole and particularly in the Algerian colony. The set of concerns and solutions advanced by the neo-traditionalist avant-garde, composed of neo-classicist Symbolists, the École Romane, the Naturistes, and others, were taken up by a variety of intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Barrès and Maurras would use these ideas to help buttress the expanding and distinct regionalist movements with an ideological coherency that would (for them) encompass all of France—an alternative France to the Jacobin republic—purged of its enemies within and protected against its enemies without. Other figures, like Gide, Grenier, and other editors of La Nouvelle Revue Française, would oppose Maurras’s Mediterranean classicism with one of their own, itself shaped by neo-traditionalism. Bertrand was particularly important in the elaboration of regionalist, nationalist and colonialist permutations of this world-view and this notion of French authenticity would ironically find its most successful elaboration in the French départements carved into the former Ottoman Empire in North Africa. In Algeria, every settler aesthetic movement had at its basis neo-traditionalist concerns which had been elaborated in the specific circumstances of fin-de-siècle Greater France, and then rooted and transformed into the specific crises of inter-war Algeria. This particular elaboration of neo-traditionalism,
found in the writings of the Algérianistes and its dissenters like Grenier, Audisio and Camus, would be brought back to French shores by means of colonial Mediterranean commerce. A striking example is how Camus’s particular vision of France and the West was structured according to a neo-traditionalist logic, and then disseminated and appropriated in novel ways in the post-war period. This strange trajectory crisscrossed the Mediterranean and France’s colonial thresholds, and in the post-war period neo-traditionalist ideas were adapted, abandoned, or reformulated anew.

Neo-traditionalists cobbled together their world-view from the components of their modern, bourgeois, French lives—from the cultural, social and political flotsam floating on the surface of modernity’s flood. They engaged in what Claude Lévi-Strauss called *bricolage*: they took components of the cultural, political and social world around them and refashioned them as a world-view. Neo-traditionalism promised a return to the past, but crucially, it also promised that neo-traditionalist intellectuals would be indispensable to this journey. They each, after all, imagined their works inaugurating a new classicism, or a new model for an old tradition. It was a remarkable, and flattering, fantasy that these intellectuals’ art would somehow regenerate a polity divorced from its traditions. This fantasy required that their art would order French lives in a uniform or predictable manner: ordered in the sense that it might provide a structure by which France could be imagined whole and pure in an era of mass migration, colonization, and dislocation, and ordered in the sense that they imagined their works commanding, summoning or legislating old traditions through new means. But their works’ meanings
were often dead letters—obscure or soon forgotten in the ever-changing contexts of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Greater France, while these neo-traditionalist intellectuals re-interpreted the meaning of their works as they crossed colonial thresholds and shifted in their political and cultural allegiances. These meanings were always destined to become obscure. Who remembers L’Homme Révolté for the Barrèssian work it is? Who remembers Le Sang des Races as a Symbolist rather than a Naturalist novel? Neo-traditionalism was coherent to neo-traditionalists: we saw this world-view and its aesthetic-political commitments outlined in the second chapter, in a specific historical period in the fin-de-siècle. The fruits of this neo-traditionalist moment had an enormous impact on subsequent French culture and politics, in Algeria and France, but not because it shaped all that followed in its wake, but rather because neo-traditionalists were only too happy to shift the emphases of their works to fit the changing tenor of French modernity: they applied neo-traditionalist form to evolving and shifting subjects. Bertrand the Dreyfusard became Bertrand the political anti-Semite. He was more than amenable to shifting his works’ emphases against Muslims, Arabs, Jews, Germans, Greeks, or Communists, depending on the audience, and his own evolving political and cultural positions. And Camus the neo-traditionalist settler intellectual became Camus the liberal anti-totalitarian. Neo-traditionalist fantasies provided a ready-made structure for those who drew from it, whether on the far-right or among the far-right’s opponents. It provided aesthetic-political strategies of mimicry by which civilization would be redeemed through savagery, just as classicism would be
resurrected through the summons of a particular aesthetic modernism. Whether Bertrand labeled it rebarbarization or Camus labeled it virtual terror, neo-traditionalism as a set of aesthetic strategies engaged in a form of colonial mimicry for the colonizers. It was a process of hybridizing civilization and savagery, decadence and purity, European and Oriental, all into a synthesized European and supremacist vision of modernity. The remainder of the conclusion discusses this peculiar sort of neo-traditionalist mimicry in a more general and abstract sense than has been up until now discussed in the contextualized and close readings in this dissertation: how mimicry and hybridity were ubiquitous concepts at the heart of the aesthetic-political strategies employed by neo-traditionalists. This particular avant-garde primitivism concealed its primitivism behind its classicist pedigree. But this aesthetic-political gesture still finds resonances in contemporary aesthetics and politics. Having looked at neo-traditionalist fantasies, we end with suggestions for future research of neo-traditionalism’s legacies, in post-war Algeria, France and even the United States.

**Mimicry, Imitation, and the Colonial-Classicist Chiasmus**

In this study of neo-traditionalism, there are distinct strategies which emerge in the twinned classicism/colonialism of neo-traditionalism. These are aesthetic-political strategies which we can identify as obeying a logic of mimicry. As has been discussed in earlier chapters, mimicry was self-consciously employed by neo-traditionalists as one of the principal aesthetic-political strategies for fantasizing a regenerated neo-traditionalist
French identity. This regenerated French identity was produced at the threshold between a decadent French modernity and a foreign barbarism. According to this logic, by mimicking the energies of foreign peoples, France would recover its own essential vitality. This was a threshold that might alternatively signify a bohemian or immigrant neighborhood in Paris, or a borderland between nations (Barrès), the Mediterranean as a liminal space (Maurras), or be embodied in the hybrid vision of the rebarbarized colonizer in Africa (Bertrand).

One of the keys to neo-traditionalist aesthetic-political strategies was mimicry of the ‘barbarian’ other. Mimicry can of course be understood in many ways. There are many distinct examples of mimicry championed as the basis of a humanist classicism. For instance, many if not most of the canonical Renaissance texts, including Pico’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, or Castiglione’s *The Courtier*, explicitly base their arguments on the notion of mimicry of the ancients. But as was plain to any neo-classicist of the fin-de-siècle, mimicry signified in new ways at the height of French imperialism. In a broad and dehistoricized sense, everything social, *pace* Gabriel Tarde, is understood as part of a process of mimicry and imitation. But Tarde’s sociology is no less a product of this modern period in which classicism, imperialism, and class stratification preoccupied the works of neo-traditionalists themselves (indeed, Tarde makes the connections between classicism, colonialism, and class explicit in his study “Impérialisme,” for *La Renaissance Latine*). Thus mimicry, in its fin-de-siècle formulations, is also the key to understanding the indeterminacy of
classicism in an era of colonialism. We find again and again neo-traditionalist intellectuals engaging in a mimicry which extends simultaneously backwards in time to antiquity and across space along colonial frontiers. In other words, mimicry as it operated among neo-traditionalists twinned classicism and colonialism.

Mimicry is, along with hybridity, one of the recurring concepts explored in postcolonial studies, particularly by Homi Bhabha. For Bhabha, mimicry is not the process of assimilation, or the strategy by which a colonized person actively decides to become, or to pass among, colonizers. It is a colonial(ist) discourse (and not a particular person) which expresses “the desire for a reformed recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite… which fixes the colonial subject as a partial presence.” Homi Bhabha argues that the representation of colonized characters mimicking colonizers appears as a mockery or satire of the very civilizing mission which girds colonial order. Mimicry as a phenomenon is presented as a destabilization of colonial order, but it is unclear how applicable Bhabha’s model, focusing on English writers writing about Indian people, applies to colonialism in a French or Algerian context. If the performance of mimicry destabilizes a supposedly monolithic colonial order, then what of the mimicry by colonizers of colonized people? And what of the mimicry by French intellectuals of Latin empires long past, that had putatively colonized their Gaulish ancestors, an act of mimicry which constituted French civilization? Rather than mimicry destabilizing colonial discourse, at least in the

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580 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (Routledge, 1994) pp. 122, 123.
context of France and Algeria, mimicry instead was the very basis for modernist, regenerative articulations of French identity, and for the articulation of a coherent settler aesthetic movement. And yet in some post-colonial theory, following Homi Bhabha, mimicry is presented as inherently ambivalent regarding colonialism. As it is articulated in the influential *Post-colonial studies: the key concepts*, mimicry of European knowledge was “hybridized” and “ambivalent”.581 Peter Dunwoodie and David Carroll, applying Bhabha’s conceptual categories to settler intellectuals in Algeria go further to argue that it is an act of anti-colonial fellowship for settler intellectuals Emmanuel Roblès and Albert Camus to argue that settler society is hybridized.582 But this was a phenomenon evident in the writings of colonial administrator Augustin Berque, and the two most august (and notorious) Algérianistes, Louis Bertrand and Robert Randau. As Emily Apter notes, “How is the hybrid ‘French Algerian,’ or ‘Algerian Frenchman’ tenable given conditions, documented by Camus himself, of irreversible economic inequality?”583 It is strange that Bertrand’s models of mimicry and hybridity are never recognized as such, and how much they align as a set of aesthetic-political strategies with later settler writers like Camus.

Bertrand’s work provides an example of a mimicry that should give us pause when as scholars we too easily use such postcolonial terminology to dehistoricize the particular valences and meanings such terms had in specific historical contexts. In other

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words, strategies of mimicry and hybridity, as they are discussed by scholars of Algerian settler literature like Peter Dunwoodie, or more recently David Carroll, are assumed to upset colonial conventions. However, as we see in the case with Bertrand, the colonial mimicry he urged in Algeria was anything but anti-colonial. These instances of colonial mimicry at the heart of neo-traditionalism also open up a series of questions that can be further pursued regarding the nature of French classicism, modernist crises of European authenticity, and the means by which a French tradition was fashioned in the modern period.

**Legacies of Neo-Traditionalism**

Neo-traditionalism was a bricolage of other ideas, discourses, concepts, and practices. This is the fate of all older ideas in modern society: to be interpreted, consumed in bits, the underlying structure forgotten. Is it only fair that the same fate awaited neo-traditionalism in the post-war and post-colonial period? The ways in which neo-traditionalism was challenged, recuperated or forgotten in the post-war period offers several possibilities for future research—research that may offer a more nuanced history of ideas of the post-war period in its relation to the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

**The Recuperation of Things Past: Neo-Traditionalism and the French New Right**
In many ways, post-war France offers, unsurprisingly, the most examples of neo-traditionalist ideas being recirculated, repackaged, or modified to fit changing circumstances. The Algerian War of Independence was a critical moment for metropolitan conceptions of French identity, and was perhaps the most important event in politicizing a young Alain de Benoist, the most famous of the New Right philosophers. In post-war France, intellectuals like de Benoist continued to disseminate neo-traditionalist programs reformulated in a post-colonial (and post-World War II) era, even while other leftist and ‘centrist’ intellectuals continued to acknowledge their debt to neo-traditionalist ideas. Pierre-André Taguieff in particular has examined the continuities between Maurrasisme and the New Right, but the importance of neo-traditionalism for the New Right, whose members are also simultaneously colonialist and avant-garde reactionaries, has not been given the same attention. Fortunes have changed for Barrès and Maurras since their purging from the French canon after the war, in no small part due to the continuing importance of their neo-traditionalist programs for regionalist, colonialist, and nationalist visions of France, never more so than in the last few years. Most revealingly, even Barrès was sympathetically brought up by Nicolas Sarkozy in a speech in the most recent presidential campaign.

Decolonizing Neo-Classicism in the Algerian War of Independence

584 On Algerian independence and its effects on French society and culture, see Shepard, The Invention of Decolonization, passim.
In Algeria, neo-traditionalist ideas had been crucial components of the colonial myths which framed French settler society. But they were not restricted to discussions among settler intellectuals alone. Algerian intellectuals engaged with neo-traditionalist ideas in complex ways, ways which became entwined in other questions concerning Berber nationalism and pan-Arabism and that would thus shape post-independence Algeria. While liberal assimilationists like Mohand Saïd Lechani invoked a hybrid “Berbero-Arabo-Latin” race in Algeria, and Rabah Zenati called for a fusing of Arab and Latin cultures, or rather, the Latinization of Algerians, Mostefa Lacheraf dismissed dissenting intellectuals like Mouloud Mammeri by tying his work to a French neo-traditionalist genealogy. Lacheraf, engaging in the cultural corollary to the FLN’s attacks on Amazigh dissenters as agents of French domination, found that Mammeri’s Berber affinities betrayed a Barrèsian genealogy, down to the similarity in titles between Barrès’s La Colline Inspirée and Mammeri’s La Colline Oubliée. In Guy Pervillé’s classic study of French-educated Algerian elites he notes that “with Ahmed Taleb[-Ibrahimi] as well as with Ferhat Abbas, one finds a curious syncretism between the heritage of the republican school system and that of Charles Maurras, proof of the ideological eclecticism of many Algerian intellectuals.”

585 Lechani’s journal on Algerian pedagogy and (initially) on assimilation, La Voix des Humbles, provides countless examples of Algerian francophone intellectuals engaging with, sometimes critically and sometimes sympathetically, neo-traditionalist ideas. For example, Lechani’s “Berbero-Arabo-Latin” Algerian formulation appears in Mohand Lechani, “L’esprit nouveau chez la jeunesse indigène,” in La Voix des Humbles, February 1929, no 71 pp. 4-6; Mostefa Lacheraf, “La Colline oubliée ou les consciences anachroniques,” in Le Jeune Musulman, 13 February, 1953.

586 Guy Pervillé, Les étudiants algériens de l’université française 1880-1962 (CNRS: 1984), p. 272n. Pervillé’s assessment is more than a little condescending, as presumably this distinguishes Algerian intellectuals from French or settler intellectuals who do not betray any curious syncretisms of French ideas – where
Algerian intellectuals engaged in cultural critiques of French colonialism took frequent aim at neo-traditionalist figures and ideas. In the years leading up to the War of Independence, intellectuals like Jean Amrouche, Mohammed Chérif Sahli and Mahfoud Kaddache reversed (or re-righted) fantasies of Latin hegemony in North Africa by reinterpreting ancient texts and histories in an anti-colonial framework. This phenomenon was so widespread that Gabriel Audisio, before the Second World War second only to Camus as a settler advocate of Mediterranean humanism and cultural hybridity, after the war a public relations officer for Algerian tourism based in Paris, began collecting the many instances of Algerian intellectuals’ reappropriation of Sallust’s *The Jugurthine War* as a classicist celebration of anti-colonial rebellion. After his work as an intellectual dedicated to Algerian independence, Kaddache’s first major post-independence work was a history of Algerian antiquity entitled *l’Algérie dans*...
In a series of reversals, Kaddache follows classical narratives established by Orientalist classicists like Gaston Boissier, revaluing their concerns of unruly Berbers under Roman civilization to one of indigenous resistance to foreign Latin occupation. Like all good works of classicism, it is one which is doubled in time: simultaneously a critique of the present and (re-)appropriation of the past.588

**American Icons: Neo-Traditionalism, the Cold War and the War on Terror**

Finally, in the post-war United States of America, neo-traditionalist intellectuals have been alternatively forgotten, adapted and transformed by American public intellectuals in the Cold War era. Neo-traditionalism was influential on a broad range of French intellectuals, including anti-fascists Louis Aragon, Antonin Artaud, André Gide, André Malraux and Albert Camus. Their neo-traditionalist affinities did not make them reactionaries, but instead marked them as grappling with popular ideas of their time about social reformation—which nevertheless were freighted with implications about the artist’s role in regard to the public, the past, and the nation. Needless to say, these intellectuals have been hugely influential on American public figures from a broad range of political backgrounds. However, post-war American intellectuals have at times misrecognized the neo-traditionalist debts coded in these intellectuals’ works, neo-

588 Mahfoud Kaddache was in the 1950s a frequent contributor to the ulemist *Le Jeune Musulman*, a post-war journal of the Jeunes de l’Association des Oulamas Musulmans d’Algérie which is a now neglected but then formidable journal of nationalist Muslim intellectuals including Ali Mérad, Kaddache, Mostefa Lacheraf and Ahmed Taleb-Ibrahim (most of these intellectuals were writing under pseudonyms). After national independence, Kaddache returned to the image of Jugurtha and anti-colonial resistance in *L’Algérie dans l’antiquité*: “The [myth of the] Pax Romana was ephemera concealing reality: that of permanent insurrections in a country which remained independent.” Mahfoud Kaddache, *L’Algérie dans l’antiquité* (Alger: SNED, 1972), p. 121
classicist debts from the fin-de-siècle which have been reproduced in a broad range of literatures like an occulted cargo. For example, there are many different ways to appreciate and engage with Camus’s work, but an historical understanding of his oeuvre must not only examine what images he portrayed to his audience and readers, but how he assembled them, and to what ends, a task perhaps more pressing now given his reappearance as the principled voice of refusal in the present “War against Terror.”

In *Terror and Liberalism*, Paul Berman observes, “We are in an absurd situation. Truly, this is a moment Camus would have appreciated. We have reason to be terrified; but it is not a good idea to be terrified.” Berman, a self-avowed liberal pragmatist, sees the sources of his conflated terrorism and totalitarianism in nineteenth-century romanticism. He adapts this critique largely from Camus’s *L’Homme révolté*, which functions as the *mise-en-scène* for his entire discussion. For Berman, an irrational cult of death has infused Romanticism, Communism, fascism, present-day Islam, Iraqi Ba’athism, and a supposedly monolithic Palestinian society. On liberalism, Berman does not see its roots in its institutions, but what he stresses repeatedly are the shared desires that shape liberalism as a socially constitutive force, and that require an act of “mass persuasion” on the part of the artist or intellectual. Though Camus the political essayist is invoked throughout Berman’s book, Camus as dramatist is absent. This might seem perfectly natural in a political essay, but Camus’s notion of theatre was intimately connected to his political commitments and contestations. In *Terror and Liberalism*, Berman’s only discussion of theatre is of Victor Hugo’s play *Hernani*, which he cites as a quintessential example of the

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590 Berman, p. 185.
romantic origins of irrational anti-liberal terror: “here was a play about rebellion which was itself an act of rebellion—a play in which the hero aimed at freedom, and arrived at murder and suicide.” Yet this description is, inadvertently, a perfect recapitulation of Albert Camus’s most famous play Caligula. Camus’s aesthetics are in fact much more complex and ambiguous than has often been presented. This is crucial to understanding Camus’s views on terror. It is also useful in better appreciating the strange ways in which terror is used aesthetically in current political writings drawing on Camus. In Terror and Liberalism, Berman subjects his readers to a spectacle of an inhuman Palestinian threat for a western audience:

this was the realm of death—the realm in which a perfect Palestinian state could luxuriate in the shade of a perfect Koranic tranquility, cleansed of every iniquitous thought and temptation and of every rival faith and ethnic group. Among the Palestinians, everybody seemed to understand this, at some level. The defiant exhibition of infant corpses at the Palestinian funerals, the macabre posters, the young men marching through the streets dressed in martyrs’ shrouds—these statements and actions showed with perfect clarity that, in the popular imagination, utopia and morgue had blended, and the ‘street’ did understand, and death was the goal. And, all over the world, good-hearted people who observed those scenes had to ask, can this really be so?

This death-cult of irrational Palestinians that appears as an amorphous threat in Berman’s writing, a monolithic Palestinian terror embodied in the thoughts of all Palestinians, is one he omnisciently details, in its utter inhumanity to his audience. But, read against an historical appreciation of neo-traditionalist aesthetic strategies, it is an unavowed virtual terror dramatized for an Anglo-American audience. Here no context and no understanding is possible; Western liberals must simply be terrorized and

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591 Ibid., p. 29.
realize that they must constitute themselves together against this spectacle of terror.

Berman’s spectacle is no less constitutive of a Western sense of identity than Camus’s neo-traditionalist dramas, but is certainly less ambiguous in its aim.

The legacies of neo-traditionalism remain, even though the specific conditions which constituted it as a corpus are not only long past, but are largely forgotten. Neo-traditionalism was a phenomenon in which a relatively small number of avant-garde elites, overwhelmingly men, built and advocated cultural fantasies of identity which were not only about masking colonial realities, but subsuming the remarkable diversity of peoples’ experiences in France itself by using aesthetic-political strategies of mimicry and regeneration. They were to be the legislators of a new regenerated France, in which the avant-garde artist overcame the crises of colonial modernity. Their ideas did find uses and they still do. An examination of this colonial classicism and its legacies is all the more pressing now. Camus is now repeatedly invoked for his political ethics in the “War against Terror” but remains misunderstood in his imbricated aesthetic aims. Bertrand will almost certainly stay forgotten, yet his ideas still eerily resonate as part of a longer-lasting cultural durée, the scope and depth of which this dissertation on neo-traditionalism can only hint at: the cultural fantasy of European supremacy.
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