

John CULBERT
Haunting the *métropole*

Abstract

Is Paris haunted by its colonial past? By means of a reading of a novel of Rachid Boudjedra, *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée*, this essay explores the stakes of recent debates on hospitality and integration, particularly in the light of the urban riots of 2005. The author argues that the politics of immigration can gain not only from policies and practices of inclusion, but also from an ethical attunement to the specters haunting the urban spaces of the metropole.

Résumé

Paris est-il hanté par son passé colonial? À travers une lecture du roman de Rachid Boudjedra, *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée*, cet essai considère les enjeux des débats récents sur l'hospitalité et l'intégration suite aux émeutes de 2005. L'auteur défend l'idée que la politique de l'immigration profiterait non seulement de politiques et pratiques d'inclusion, mais aussi d'une éthique orientée vers les spectres qui hantent les espaces urbains de la métropole.

Keywords

métro, postcolonial, immigration, « hauntology », hospitality, *intégration*

Bio

John Culbert est l'auteur de *Paralyses : Literature, Travel, and Ethnography in French Modernity* (à paraître 2010) et a publié de nombreux essais critiques dans les revues *Qui Parle*, *L'Esprit Créateur*, *October* et *Postmodern Culture*. Il a enseigné la littérature française et comparée à Williams College, SUNY New Paltz, l'Université de Californie (Irvine), et Scripps College.

À nouveau, à nouveau, marchant et toujours sur place, un autre pays, d'autres villes, d'autres routes, le même pays.

— Blanchot, *L'Attente l'oubli*

The postcolonial *arrivant*

Zygmunt Bauman argues that globalization has stratified and polarized the world into two populations: *global* subjects with the privilege to travel and *local* subjects confined by borders, prisons, immigration controls and lack of resources to a more static existence. “The mark of the excluded in the era of time/space compression is *immobility*” (Bauman 1998: 113). Travel and immobilization are, then, two faces of a global economic system that grants freedom of movement to some at the expense of others. Global travelers are, however, not simply willful agents of travel; rather, as economic subjects they reap the advantages of a system of consumerism and flexible accumulation that *requires* their permanent displacement and perpetual consumption. These privileged “tourists,” as Bauman names them, are *compelled* to travel, not unlike the unfortunate “vagabonds,” who “are on the move because they have been pushed from behind – having first been spiritually uprooted from the place that holds no promise, by a force of seduction or propulsion too powerful, and often too mysterious, to resist” (92). It is precisely this *common* displacement in a precarious economic world system that is denied in the separation of tourists from vagabonds: “*Green light for the tourists, red light for the vagabonds*” (93). This separation often occurs through roadblocks and fortified borders, but also through violent acts of disavowal: “the vagabond is the tourist’s nightmare; the tourist’s ‘inner demon’ that has to be exorcised,” Bauman says. (97). “The line which divides them is tenuous and not always clearly drawn. One can easily cross it without noticing” (96).

Narratives of immigration amply confirm Bauman’s account of the politics of contemporary travel. Journeying to the *métropole*, the immigrant carries with him the “tenuous line” that divides his wants and needs from the privilege of the global tourist. Unlike the tourist, however, the immigrant is more likely to be *paralyzed* by that dividing-line, which separates worthy from unworthy lives, whether at border checkpoints or in the violent reflexes of the righteous citizen. Edward Said argues that empire appears as a “shadowy presence” in metropolitan culture, and the colonized tends to emerge from a site of exclusion as an “unwelcome appearance” (Said 1993: xvi). If, however, the colonial immigrant appears as monstrous and strange, it is not because he is *alien*, but because he has

been “alienated,” as Freud says, by repression (Freud 1997: 217). The immigrant imports the alienated truth of imperial culture, making the *métropole* into an uncanny home peopled by guests who are *unheimlich*, strangely familiar.

To illustrate these issues of travel, immigration and postcolonial haunting I turn to a novel of Rachid Boudjedra. Boudjedra’s, *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée*, which relates the nightmarish journey of an Algerian immigrant lost in the bowels of the Paris *métro*. *Topographie* dramatically captures the stakes of the French politics of immigration; I will argue, further, that it serves as a prime source-text for a politics of postcolonial hospitality. Indeed, Boudjedra’s novel may itself be considered a work of hospitality, as it weaves numerous literary references, notably *Ulysses*, into its narrative. Like Joyce’s novel, *Topographie* is restricted to the time-span of a single day; in Boudjedra’s novel; in Boudjedra’s case, that day is a fateful September 26, 1973. Unlike Bloom, however, Boudjedra’s protagonist is unnamed and anonymous, and his itinerary is less an allegory than an ironic critique of thus heroic narratives of adventure, discovery and return. Further, rising to the challenge of *Ulysses*’ prose style, *Topographie* poses a challenge to narrative as such; contradictory versions of events impede the progress of the story, and long, labyrinthine sentences, often lacking punctuation, weave in and out of different angles of perspective. The reader’s disorientation thus matches that of the traveler, whose perspective is further complicated by the voice of an investigating officer who, hapless, irate and racist, attempts to organize the testimony of a number of witnesses to the traveler’s journey, which ends in the racially-motivated murder foretold by the book’s title. Boudjedra’s narrative techniques have a striking political aim: the protagonist’s impeded progress and violent end are the symptoms, specifically, of racism and exclusion. The fateful day of his journey is located within a particular historical moment, that of a vicious spate of anti-Arab murders in metropolitan France.

Boudjedra’s richly intertextual novel draws significantly on narrative techniques of the *nouveau roman* as well. The “labyrinth” of Boudjedra’s *métro* may be seen as a nod to Robbe-Grillet’s *Dans le labyrinthe*, and another textual reference, no doubt, is the group of short texts “Dans les couloirs du métropolitain” in *Instantanés*. The first of these texts describes a group of people on an escalator; Robbe-Grillet insists on the stasis of these travelers: “[U]n groupe immobile, debout sur les dernières marches, qui vient à peine de quitter la plate-forme de départ, s’est figé aussitôt pour la durée du parcours mécanique, s’est arrêté tout d’un coup, en

pleine agitation, en pleine hâte, comme si le fait de mettre les pieds sur les marches mouvantes avait soudain paralysé les corps” (Robbe-Grillet 1962: 78). The text seems to offer nothing more than the description of this motionless group on the moving staircase. And yet, in a mirroring *mise en abyme*, the perspective of the describing eye is reproduced in one of the characters in the group, who looks down to see another group – probably, in fact, the same one – at the point of departure. An exercise in description, “L’escalier mécanique” thus abolishes what it purports to describe, since what is seen exists only as a textual mirror-play of reading. The paradoxical moving immobility of the scene reinforces the narrative’s logical impossibility, that of a *metalepsis*, in the substitution of a cause for an effect: the viewer of the scene turns to look down the escalator, in reaction to the backward look of the person in front of him, who, paradoxically, is himself viewed, at the beginning of the narrative, by the backward look of the former.

Topographie has a similar scene on an escalator, though the problems of perspective are not merely of a formal nature, as in Robbe-Grillet, but reflect the bafflement and fear of the immigrant. Boudjedra’s traveler makes the same backward look on the escalator: “Ce qui l’intrigue, . . . c’est que sur la plate-forme de départ qui s’éloigne de plus en plus, personne n’apparaît comme si le groupe avait l’exclusivité de l’usage de l’escalier mécanique. . . . Il se demande s’il ne s’est pas trompé et s’il n’est pas en train de voyager avec un groupe particulier, ce qu’il n’a pas le droit de faire. . . . Mais il est vite rassuré car au bas des marches, là-bas, très loin maintenant, un groupe de jeunes, bruyant et chahuteurs, prend place sur l’escalier” (Boudjedra 1975: 102-3). In Boudjedra’s *nouveau roman*, defamiliarization is caused by cultural estrangement, and in insisting, like Robbe-Grillet, on the paradox of motion in stasis, Boudjedra however makes that paradox a source of the immigrant’s fear: “le voyageur, la valise à la main, observe silencieusement le groupe qui l’intimide par sa fixité vertigineuse” (101). The paradoxical perspective of Robbe-Grillet’s story becomes, in *Topographie*, that of a character who struggles to make himself known, and this voice of the excluded is one that the reader, like the traveling companions on the escalator, may well fail to heed: “parvenus presque en haut de la rampe les personnes composant le groupe continuent à se taire, comme si elles faisaient exprès, dans le but de l’effrayer, le refuser et le rejeter” (103). What I called the *metalepsis* of cause and effect in Robbe-Grillet is here a confusion as to the source of the immigrant’s fear, a presumed hostility that anticipates the actual murder at the end of the story. One might say that such violence is the cultural symptom of a persistent

metalepsis, according to which the *cause* of violence is blamed on an *effect*. Thus, in racist discourse, naming the North African an “invader” substitutes the cause of immigration – the invasion and colonization of Algeria, and the disruption of its economy – for its effect – the search for economic security. Boudjedra indicates this violent substitution in the scene of murder itself: “vivant l’histoire à reculons,” Boudjedra says, the immigrant’s assailants throw themselves on him “comme s’ils étaient non pas les assassins... mais les victimes” (154).

In *Lettres algériennes*, Boudjedra reminds us that for the Algerian immigrant, “on monte à Paris” (Boudjedra 1995: 11). This supposed upward mobility is ironized in the escalator scene and in the immigrant’s long journey in the metro’s labyrinth, “les dédales de la mythologie assimilationniste” (145). Boudjedra’s critique of French anti-immigration attitudes and policies thus targets both the myths of travel, including *The Odyssey*, and mythology in the Barthesian sense, as collective delusion of consumer culture. Though illiterate, the immigrant engages in detailed study of several advertising posters that fascinate and disturb him for their sexuality and indecency. The passages devoted to the description of these posters draw effectively on the *nouveau roman*’s technique of *mise en abyme*. One of the posters is none other than a picture of a baby on a toilet seat, playing with a roll of toilet paper, accompanied with the line “Lotus est doux comme la peau de bébé” (167). Since the letter O is replaced with a stylized lotus flower, the immigrant is able to identify what the name refers to, but remains perplexed as to its purpose in the advertisement. And yet this failure of reading, which impedes his reception of the sign’s mythic signification, allows for a sophisticated critique of camera angle, color, lighting, and props, and even speculation on the equipment outside the frame of the image, all of which, the immigrant reflects, serve to make the viewer overlook the scatological and “incongruous” aspects of the scene (165). This insight is more than the product of prudish offense; it is, rather, a failure of ideological interpellation, and exemplifies the postcolonial inheritance of the *nouveau roman*’s formal defamiliarization. The demystification of the poster also leads the immigrant into speculation on the Homeric implications of the lotus: as the text indicates, in Chapter 9 of *The Odyssey* the lotus-eaters served lotus to Ulysses’ companions, “qui en oublièrent leur patrie” (167). The mythological story of the lotus-eaters thus resonates with the risks the immigrant runs in leaving the native country and succumbing to the lure of the *métropole*. At the same time, however, the immigrant recognizes the lotus as a plant belonging not to France but to his own native region; as a result,

Topographie's reference to *The Odyssey* thus does not simply sing the praise of home and the fatal lure of the other. Instead, according to a familiar postcolonial predicament, the immigrant travels *between* homes, between the “mauvaise réinsertion” of a return to the postcolony (121) and failed integration into the *métropole*, voyaging both within and against the mythologies of travel. Seth Graebner argues that Boudjedra's protagonist is not an *immigrant* but an *émigrant* who never reaches his destination (Graebner 2007: 294). The point deserves some refinement; as I will argue in what follows, Boudjedra's protagonist is an *arrivant*: neither inside nor outside, and tampering with the boundaries that define their topographies.

Disoriented as he is, over the course of the day Boudjedra's immigrant shows some progress in his interpretation of the signs that surround him. This change in perspective, however, is due to retrospective thoughts that may come to him only at the end; the entire narrative, it seems, is the fantasmagoria of his mind at the moment of death. One poster in particular undergoes a dramatic reevaluation in the course of his harrowing narrative. The poster shows a radiant woman and child that he first takes as a sign meant to “souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les mécréants de la terre” (215), without realizing, however, that it is simply an advertisement for a tampon. He blames himself later for taking this picture for “une marque d'hospitalité” (221), and its ambiguous message of welcome reappears in his final thoughts as he bleeds to death. Interestingly, this poster reappears twenty-five years later in Boudjedra's more recent novel, *Fascination*, where the protagonist Lam first regards the picture as a sign of welcome, then reconsiders its message as something other than “une marque d'hospitalité” (Boudjedra 2000: 239). Figures of the marginal, neither inside nor outside the *métropole*, these immigrants sketch out the uncanny trace of the other in the margins of French culture. We might say that the immigrant thus traces a *marque d'hospitalité*, a problematic mark or margin *between* hospitality and inhospitality, integration and exclusion, assimilation and alterity. Can this margin be assimilated? What politics of hospitality can recognize this “tenuous line”? ¹

Postcolonial haunts

Boudjedra's *Topographie* was written after a wave of murders of North Africans in 1973.² Ten years later, after another wave of attacks, *La Marche des Beurs* proved a watershed in immigrant political organization and public advocacy for civil rights. The following year Tahar Ben Jelloun

published *Hospitalité française*, arguing that French anti-Arab racism is the violent symptom of a failed reckoning with the colonial past. Ben Jelloun shows that two dominant myths constrain the immigrant: the “myth of return” to the postcolony, which casts the immigrant as a temporary visitor, and the myth of French hospitality itself, cruelly negated in the exclusion of the immigrant. In the years since *Hospitalité française* was published, the French state has taken an increasingly repressive approach to immigrants, with immigration quotas, forced expulsions, and limits on access to citizenship. During the same period, the *affaire du foulard* tested the limits of French tolerance of cultural difference within the abstract framework of republican citizenship. Meanwhile, state housing projects in the suburbs have continued to widen the economic and social rifts between immigrants and the native French. The myth of French hospitality was exploded in the fall of 2005, when riots broke out in suburbs all over France in the wake of the death of two immigrant youths in an altercation with the police. Images broadcast night after night showed cars burning; for three weeks the French woke up to the grim spectacle of charred hulks of automobiles. In a practice named a “rodeo,” youths stole cars, went on joyrides and finally smashed and set them on fire. There is a bitter irony in this attack on the automobile; among the poorest of French citizens, the suburban youths belong to families for whom a car is often an impossible luxury. At the same time, as François Maspero showed in his *Roissy Express: A Journey Through the Paris Suburbs*, residents of the suburbs lack good access to public transit, and their housing projects are stranded in zones of administrative neglect (Maspero 1994). Similarly, Paul Silverstein points out that the *banlieusard* views the public transit system as “a space of harassment, racism and alienation” (Silverstein 2004: 113). And in an uncanny return of colonial history, the state responded to the 2005 riots with emergency measures not used since the Algerian War.

As extreme responses to social alienation, riots and “rodeos” belong to one end of a wider spectrum of resistant acts designed “to take possession of spaces defined violently” (Silverstein, 115). Drawing on Michel de Certeau, Silverstein sees these as “spatial practices” and “tactics” that take advantage of the contradictions of the lived reality of the *banlieue*. De Certeau’s “tactics” provide a useful way to account for lived behaviors that escape the neat divisions of illicit and legal acts, and whose subversions express the promise of other mobilities. And while immigrants are not de Certeau’s primary focus, h A tactic, moreover, might be framed as a practice of *hospitality*. “La tactique n’a pour lieu que celui de l’autre. Elle s’y

insinue, fragmentairement, sans le saisir en son entier, sans pouvoir le tenir à distance” (de Certeau 1980: 21). De Certeau’s prime example of such tactics is outlined in his “Marches dans la ville,” an essay on “l’homme ordinaire,” the “héros anonyme” that resonates with Leopold Bloom in Dublin and Boudjedra’s nameless immigrant in Paris (33). “Pratiquer l’espace, c’est... être autre et passer à l’autre” (197-8). The mere act of walking, in its improvisations and weaving of links, defies the city’s regimentation and surveillance, and yet it is not *opposed* to a structuring order; rather, walkers “échappent à la discipline sans être pour autant hors du champ où elle s’exerce” (179). Similarly, place-names in the city serve not simply as official designations, but as nodes of “tropismes sémantiques” (189) that secretly orient the walker “tout comme ils peuvent hanter des rêves” (190). As de Certeau says, “Ces noms créent du non-lieu dans les lieux; ils les muent en passages” and “hantent l’espace urbain comme des habitants en trop ou en plus” (193); “ils créent dans le lieu même cette érosion ou non-lieu qu’y creuse la loi de l’autre” (192). These ghostly inhabitants transform familiar places into familiar *haunts*. Indeed, de Certeau says, “On n’habite que des lieux hantés” (196).

Why this emphasis on *haunting* in de Certeau’s essay? What ghosts are shadowing his anonymous pedestrian? Given that “Marches dans la ville” is based on dense urban pedestrian spaces, it betrays a certain nostalgia in a time of increasing suburbanization and automotive transport. Reading with and against de Certeau’s model of pedestrian mobility, a different anonymous subject profiles itself, that of the marginal immigrant, relegated to suburban enclaves and struggling for *droit de cité*. The immigrant other appears here, in the margins of his text, as an other summoned yet invisible, crucial to his arguments but relegated to the periphery. As the marginal, the immigrant exposes the margins of lived space, perhaps the very threshold of the proper home, tampering with the boundaries of the here and the now. This uncanny presence of the immigrant is powerfully rendered in Michael Haneke’s film *Caché*, in which a Parisian couple suffers the threat of a home invasion, and uncovers over the course of the narrative the guilty memory of inhospitality to an Algerian boy whose parents died in the Parisian massacre of October 1961. *Caché* dramatizes the devastating costs of inhospitality and repressed history, and calls for a politics of mourning and an historical reckoning with the events of 1961 and the broader legacy of French colonial history (Haneke 2005).³

Jacques Derrida provides the basis for such a politics of mourning, and his focus in recent years on immigration, hospitality and “hauntology” draws together all the themes raised by our reading of Boudjedra’s

Topographie. “Pas de politique,” Derrida asserts, “...sans hospitalité ouverte à l’hôte comme *ghost* (Derrida 1996: 112). As such, a politics of mourning raises the challenge of hospitality in its most unconditionally ethical dimension, as a welcome to the absolutely other. Derrida shows, however, that mourning is constrained by a number of paradoxes: is it more faithful to welcome and absorb the dead other, at the cost of denying their very death? Or is it more faithful to acknowledge their absolute otherness, at the cost of abandoning them? The former would amount to a contradictory assimilation of the other; the latter, a recognition that excludes. Mourning and hospitality are thus constrained by “deux infidélités” and “un choix impossible” (Derrida 1981: 276). The specter is itself the sign of this impossibility: what the ghost manifests is an intimate other, “l’autre dans le même” (274). Indeed, *whatever* appears bears the trace of this spectrality, by which it *returns*, repeats and supplements itself. The spectral, then, is what in any given event and location *takes place*; but it is also, by the same token, what *takes the place* in a surreptitious “métonymie de l’instantané” (288). An uncanny and duplicitous *taking place* is thus inscribed in every proper place as its spectral margin. This is what Derrida calls “la puissance fantomatique du supplément”: “il y est insituable, ne s’inscrit jamais dans l’objectivité homogène de son espace cadré mais il l’habite ou plutôt il le hante” (274). A politics of mourning for Derrida thus departs from the recognition of the uncanniness of the proper, and indeed of the home, altered before any traveler’s departure or return, before any immigrant’s arrival. To practice hospitality to the immigrant is to give room to the other where hospitality has already, unknowingly, *taken place*.

How is such hospitality put into practice? In 1983, Ben Jelloun suggested that a North African should be placed in a ministerial post. Twenty years later, Azouz Begag took up such a post as *Ministre délégué à la Promotion de l’Egalité des Chances* of integration. In a terrible historical irony, Begag’s early tenure as minister would coincide with the riots of the fall of 2005. Begag’s work up to the events of 2005 had criticized the assimilationist model of immigration, arguing instead for an integration that allowed for ethnic difference. His critiques address a familiar paradox of hospitality: according to the secular republican model of French citizenship, for others to accede to citizenship, they must abandon their very identity. In a similar paradox, immigrant claims to ethnic identification are denigrated as a divisive *communautarisme* by secularists who themselves enjoy the benefits of religious, racial, and cultural identification that go without saying. In this light, the cultural and political challenge of

immigrants is not so much a confrontation with French 'national character' and *laïcité* as it is the symptom of the double standards and tacit exclusions of French identity itself.

Begag's *Ethnicity and Equality*, written immediately prior to the riots of 2005, has been seen as a prescient diagnosis of the failures of French integration (Hargreaves 2007). Begag's book advocates for a multicultural recognition of ethnic diversity in France, and outlines new employment initiatives and programs for improved educational access for immigrant youths, which he divides into three categories, the *rouilleurs*, the *dérouilleurs* and the *intermédiaires*. *Ethnicity and Equality* emphasizes the positive role played by the economically and socially successful *dérouilleurs*, as opposed to the delinquent *rouilleurs*, those who remain stuck in place. As these names show, Begag's sociology relies on metaphors of movement and stasis. "Mobility," Begag says, "best corresponds to the new outlook that France needs" (Begag 2007: 92). The author encourages the young ethnics to take "the elevator of social mobility" (120), to "get moving" (125). While he is deeply concerned with the exclusions suffered by the young immigrants, Begag faults the *rouilleurs* for their sense of victimhood, and especially their resentment of the *dérouilleurs* who succeed, who "get out" of the neighborhood. "Why are those who get out rejected in this way?" Begag asks. "One of the reasons is that those who succeed, those who gain personal autonomy, make brutally and unmistakably visible the immobility of those who rust where they are" (81). This is perhaps true, though not in the sense that Begag intends. Bauman, as we have seen, argues that the immobility of the underprivileged, or at best their vagabondage, is the price they pay for the mobility of others. Begag himself would no doubt admit that not everyone can climb the social elevator, and that a certain resentment of the privileged is perhaps inevitable. His argument, then, would simply be that young Arabs in France should not arbitrarily bear the brunt of economic and social exclusion, or defeat their own chances for success. However, despite their best intentions, Begag's policies fail to account for what Emmanuel Wallerstein calls the "social-structural" nature of the *rouilleurs*' precarious status (Wallerstein 1999: 113). Indeed, what the "immobile" *rouilleurs* and rioters manifest above all is the *systematic* nature of their marginalization, which improved opportunities for the few cannot resolve.

This is to suggest that Begag, the sociologist of integration, may have failed to identify the social group to which he has devoted his work. The *rouilleurs* and rioters of 2005 are not only members of an ethnic minority, but belong to a more amorphous group voicing their exclusion on a

broader economic and cultural scene. Radical sociologists and political theorists increasingly emphasize the *global* affiliation of this disparate group: the “multitude,” in Hardt and Negri’s term, the “post-communal citizen,” in Balibar’s (Hardt and Negri 2004; Balibar 2004). The fault-lines of economic exploitation, once located more securely beyond the borders of the European states, increasingly lie within the bounds of the *métropole*, as globalization and neo-liberal economic policies spread their instabilities into the domestic territory. The immigrant suburban youth in France are the primary economic victims of the deregulation, privatization, welfare cuts and unemployment that have opened a widening gulf between the successful and those left behind. Begag largely skirts this victimhood and exclusion in the name of personal initiative. Likewise, his discourse of tolerance and inclusiveness cannot encompass the larger group of economically excluded who loom behind the suburban rioters, those displaced and uprooted by the turbulence of the global market, Bauman’s “vagabonds” of globalization. In what seems a willful reversal of such concerns, Begag’s book ends not with immigration but *emigration*, rhapsodizing on the ambitions of a new “beurgeoisie,” the “megamovers” who have left the French suburbs to strike out into a world of opportunities (127). In retrospect, these neo-liberal illusions seem to speak as well to the illusions of Begag’s own ministerial career, marked by his differences with the Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, and with the UMP government’s repressive police policies. The aggressive language of Sarkozy played a large part in fueling the rage of the rioters, and his election as president in 2007 may be credited to the posture he adopted during the crisis. Begag resigned from his post as minister due to his differences with Sarkozy and the government’s repressive policies. In spite of these differences, however, Begag made common cause with the controversial CPE law, vaunted by the UMP as a measure to promote youth employment, but which provoked a fresh wave of riots and demonstrations in March 2006, in response to which the French media revived the specter of irrational violence, or worse, “anti-white racism” on the part of rioting suburban youths. It has been the mission of radical sociologists such as Michel Kokoreff to account for the social causes of such continuing violence and to articulate the latent voice within their problematic actions, in defiance of Sarkozy’s scornful dictum, “L’inexcusable est inexcusable” (Kokoreff, 2008: 312).

The young ethnics of France are a diverse population, as Begag shows. But as targets of anti-immigrant attitudes and Islamophobia, they are habitually grouped as a threat to French culture and public security. To

confront the hegemony of French racism one must address the ways in which that population is habitually singled out as a group. The point here is not to assign a single identity to this grouping; rather, it is to point out that the grouping is a factor of “a unified response,” as Talal Asad says, by a dominant population bent on the denigration of a convenient ethnic population (Asad 1993: 272). The unified response to immigrants constitutes a new and disturbing consensus of metropolitan populations, binding together an imagined community of natives in a sacrificial logic. Citizens of post-9/11 security states override their internal differences in this vindictive logic, whose lines of exclusion are clearly defined by colonial history and the atavistic force of religious hostility. Today, the state seems increasingly unable to manage the economic disorders and inequalities that have developed in the wake of colonization and globalization. But in a show of force, the security state manages the distribution of pain, making French Arabs and Muslims surrogate victims of the security state. The true target of this hostility, however, is neither alien, strange or other; it is the return of the colonized *subject* in the segregated quarters of a recolonized *métropole*. In a striking phrase, Balibar says that this *subject* is “l’ombre portée du *citoyen* dans l’espace de la souveraineté” (Balibar 2004: 40). The subject, appearing only as ghost, monster or shadow, is the dark side of the citizen’s privilege and welfare, a postcolonial reminder that the birth of the secular, democratic citizen went hand in hand with the *subjugation* of colonized others. In the post- and neo-colonial era, the *subject* of power, as opposed to the citizen with guaranteed rights, is located more squarely within the borders of the state, or challenging those borders through immigration. This neo-colonial subject, the shadow of the citizen, bears the repressive and exclusionary force of the state, and few of its benefits, in the social wastelands of the *banlieues*. Balibar’s political solution is to extend a *droit de cité* to immigrants (47), and in so doing he invokes an old principle of hospitality. As we have seen, this is a difficult, and well-nigh impossible task; it entails the unlearning of privilege and a reckoning with the dead, and with the shadows we cast, in the haunted spaces we share.

To Balibar’s hospitable *droit de cité* we might also add the *droit de citer*, a right implicitly invoked by Boudjedra’s haunting and intricate *Topographie*. Citation should be understood not as a simple copying, however, but rather as a subversive resignification of the original. In this sense, following Judith Butler’s notion of the “insubordination” of the copy (Butler, 1993: 45), citation mimes subjugation, the better to claim the unsaid in the original and to voice the more complex agency of speech as *subjection*.

Postcolonial citation occurs where the source-text seems to *admit* nothing, yet betrays an opening where the specter can make its appearance. Accordingly, hospitality is not generously extended or gratefully accepted, but is *claimed* without being fully owned, and on the basis of prior claims that admit more than they avow. This is the right claimed by Boudjedra's *Topographie*, which invites us to share the hopes and fears of our shadow selves.

[end]

Derrida's reference to nostalgia, myth and a lost native country seems to evoke, once again, Ulysses' homeward journey. Deconstruction requires that we orient our thinking toward the other, toward those excluded from Ulysses' journeys. A political critique of travel will, then, depart from an espousal of the excluded; gender, sexuality and race are among the most important zones of exclusion and repression. Paradoxically, however, this reorientation cannot merely take the form of a call for more inclusiveness, if that inclusiveness entails another totalizing and assimilating grasp. The French politics of colonial assimilation is a vivid reminder of the violence, denial and hypocrisy that may accompany such an appropriation of the other. Likewise, a postcolonial politics of integration will fail to the extent that it reduces the alterity of the immigrant. In its ethical orientation toward radical alterity, deconstructive politics is particularly sensitive to the pitfalls of assimilation and recognition. Deconstruction thus advocates neither exclusion nor assimilation, and would suspect any simple call for the recognition of the other. For these reasons the politics of deconstruction remain obscure to liberal and leftist politics alike. And yet deconstruction is very hospitable to the ambiguities of immigrant identity, which inhabits a marginal status between identification and rivalry, assimilation and difference, self and other. And if hospitality always entails a welcoming into the *home*, Derrida refigures that home not as Ulysses' destination, but as an uncanny – unhomely – site of encounter with the other. Home economics, then, is a practice of uncanny hospitality, a reckoning with the otherness that always already disrupts the security and self-identity of the presumed home

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Notes

¹ Leïla Sebbar's recent *Métro: Instantanés* adds a striking new intertext to the weave of narratives we have followed here. With a title evocative of Robbe-Grillet's short fictions, Sebbar's book updates the perplexities of Boudjedra's traveler in a collection of episodes and portraits from a more contemporary multiethnic Parisian *métro*.

² 1973 saw the highest incidence up to that date of racist attacks in France against Algerians. In response to the violence, on September 20 the Algerian government temporarily suspended all immigration to France, which was followed by the French government decision in 1974 to halt the recruitment of Algerian laborers, key contributors up to then to post-WWII economic growth. This decision coincides with the end of the *trente glorieuses* of French prosperity. See Ben Jelloun, 112-113.

³ On October 17, 1961, as many as two hundred Algerian immigrants were murdered by the police in Paris. These murders followed a peaceful demonstration against the war and against a curfew specifically targeting the Algerian population.