
History as Literature, Literature as History: Cagayous of Algiers

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WHAT IS STRIKING about the recent efflorescence of postcolonial studies is the degree to which the intellectual lead has been taken not by historians but by other academics, especially literature specialists. The foundational text in the field, *Orientalism*, was written by a literary critic, Edward Said.¹ The two leading anthologies in the field were compiled by literary critics; in one, "History" is listed among fourteen other subsections.² Literary critic Robert Young identifies the "holy trinity" of postcolonial studies as Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha—all literature specialists.³ These disciplinary developments stand in stark contrast to earlier historiographical trends such as the now aging "new social history" in which historians were in the methodological forefront. While there may be a tendency for historians to conflate postcolonial literary analyses with postcolonial studies per se and to dismiss both, this would be to throw out the baby—the postcolonial studies resuscitation of colonialism as a central area of scholarly inquiry—with the bathwater—the relatively greater emphasis on literary texts within postcolonial studies. That literature specialists stake out different positions on writers such as Frantz Fanon and Albert Camus points to certain controversies within the field and some possible openings for historians.

Three decades after his death, Fanon has been canonized by postcolonial studies; in the field of literary criticism, he is at the center. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., identifies a number of issues that arise in reading Fanon and more generally in the field.⁴ Gates begins by discussing Said on Fanon and points out that, while Said situates

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¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

² See Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York, 1993); and Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (New York, 1995), where "History" is the eleventh section. See also Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen, eds., *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory* (New York, 1994); and two collective volumes edited by historians, Nicholas B. Dirks, ed., *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1992); and Gyan Prakash, ed., *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* (Princeton, N.J., 1995).

³ Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (New York, 1990), chaps. 7–9.

⁴ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Critical Fanonism," *Critical Inquiry*, 17 (1991): 457–70.

Fanon's writing as an instance of resistance literature, this discussion of resistance occurs later and separately from the all-encompassing embrace of *Orientalism*. Gates then turns to Homi Bhabha, who, writing on Said, argues that Said's inability to deal in the same text with both colonial power and resistance is a problem that runs throughout his work. "There is always, in Said," writes Bhabha, "the suggestion that colonial power and discourse is possessed entirely by the coloniser which is a historical and theoretical simplification."⁵ Where Bhabha has gone on to open up colonial texts imaginatively by stressing their ambivalent, hybrid nature, Gates moves next to Abdul JanMohamed, who criticizes Bhabha for restoring a spurious "unity of the 'colonial subject (both coloniser and colonised)' . . . Though he cites Fanon, Bhabha completely ignores Fanon's definition of the conqueror/native relation as a 'Manichean' struggle—a definition that is not a fanciful metaphoric caricature but an accurate representation of a profound conflict."⁶ Next, Gates rehearses Benita Parry's criticism of JanMohamed. "Absent from JanMohamed's exposition," for Parry, "is Fanon's grasp of the paradoxes and pitfalls of 'rediscovering tradition' and re-presenting it within a western system of meanings."⁷

Issues of power, resistance, and, by extension, agency—bread-and-butter issues for historians—are certainly central here in these different readings of Fanon, but Gates argues that literary theorists often find themselves in the following double bind: "You can empower discursively the native and open yourself to charges of downplaying the epistemic (and literal) violence of colonialism; or play up the absolute nature of colonial domination, thus textually replicating the repressive operations of colonialism."⁸ In Gayatri Spivak's work, informed by Jacques Derrida, Gates contends that a slippage occurs whereby colonialism becomes the discourse of colonialism. "What Jacques Derrida calls writing, Spivak, in a brilliant reversal, has renamed colonial discourse . . . The Derridian *mot*, that there is

⁵ Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse," in John Caughie, ed., *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality* (New York, 1992), 318. Compare Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 459; and Edward Said, "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," *Critical Inquiry*, 15 (1989): 205–25. Bhabha's essay is a revised version of "Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," in Francis Barker, et al., eds., *The Politics of Theory* (Colchester, 1983), 194–211. As "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," it has now been reprinted in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York, 1994), but without the sentence quoted here; see page 72. His "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition" was published as the introduction to Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967; London, 1986). It has been revised as "Interrogating Identity: Frantz Fanon" and reprinted in *Location of Culture*.

⁶ Abdul JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., *Race, Writing, and Difference* (Chicago, 1986), 78–79. Compare Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 462. JanMohamed's use of the term "unity" is inaccurate, for what Bhabha was pointing to was "the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs the colonial subject (both colonizer and colonized)." Bhabha, "Other Question," 313, in Caughie, *Sexual Subject*. See Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 67, where for "the colonial subject" Bhabha has substituted the clumsy locution "colonial identification subject."

⁷ See Benita Parry, "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," *Oxford Literary Review*, 9 (1987): 47. Compare Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 464. Gates sums up his discussion by saying, "If Said made of Fanon an advocate of post-postmodern counternarratives of liberation; if JanMohamed made of Fanon a Manichean theorist of colonialism as absolute negation; and if Bhabha cloned, from Fanon's *theoria*, another Third World post-structuralist, Parry's Fanon . . . turns out to confirm her own rather optimistic vision of literature and social action." Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 465.

⁸ Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 462.

nothing outside the text, is reprised as the argument that there is nothing outside (the discourse of) colonialism."⁹

Significantly, only in a footnote does Gates explicitly call for Fanon to be "historicized."¹⁰ Without taking anything away from these and other literary critics, as a historian I would like to see the historicization of Fanon taken much further; to see the emphasis on his book *Black Skins, White Masks* and the psychological dynamics of colonialism supplemented with more attention paid to his *Wretched of the Earth* and the context of the Algerian Revolution (1954–1962); to trace the unraveling of the revolution from the 1988 riots in Algiers to the civil war raging in Algeria today, in addition to applauding Fanon's participation in the revolution; to consider whether Fanon's Manichean view of colonialism is more applicable to French settler colonialism in Algeria than to other colonial situations before universalizing and applying it globally.¹¹

Interestingly enough, Fanon has moved to the center of the literary field as Albert Camus has moved toward the margins; not so long ago, Camus was enshrined at the center—postwar existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre, and *L'étranger* (1942), the Nazi occupation of France and *La peste* (1947), Cold War anticommunism and *L'homme revolte* (1951).¹² Alongside the critical literature on Camus, which tends to detach him from the historical context of colonial Algeria and concentrate instead on literary form and philosophical ideas, I would point in particular to the work of Conor Cruise O'Brien and Said, which emphasizes the historical and political context of Camus' fictions.¹³ Said, for instance, bypasses the canonical texts to look at the story collection *L'exil et le royaume*, where he zeroes in on one scene in one story, "La femme adultère."¹⁴ "Janine, the protagonist, leaves her husband's bed-

⁹ Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 466. "The course we've been plotting leads us, then, to what is, in part, Spivak's critique of Parry's critique of JanMohamed's critique of Bhabha's critique of Said's critique of colonial discourse." Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 465.

¹⁰ Moreover, it is significant that "to begin to sketch out" the path such historicization should take, Gates suggests that "a properly contextualized reading" of Fanon's book *Black Skins, White Masks* "should situate it in respect to" such works as Jean-Paul Sartre, *Réflexions sur la question juive* (Paris, 1946), and Dominique O. Mannoni, *Psychologie de la colonisation* (Paris, 1950). Gates, "Critical Fanonism," 458, n. 2.

¹¹ Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris, 1952), trans. as *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York, 1967); and Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris, 1961), trans. as *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963; New York, 1968). On *The Wretched of the Earth*, see the perceptive essay by Edmund Burke III, "Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*," *Daedalus*, 105 (1976): 127–35. Regarding the psychological dynamics of colonialism, note that one of the earliest references to Jacques Lacan in postcolonial studies is found in *Black Skin, White Masks*, 161–64, n. 25. For the unraveling of the revolution, see, for orientation, Charles-Robert Ageron, *Modern Algeria: A History from 1830 to the Present*, Michael Brett, trans. (Trenton, N.J., 1991), 129–44; John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington, Ind., 1992), 195–256; Benjamin Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris, 1992); special issue, "Algeria/Algérie," *Méditerranéens/Méditerranéens*, no. 4 (Summer 1993); special issue, "L'Algérie en contrechamp," *Peuples Méditerranéens/Mediterranean Peoples*, nos. 70–71 (January–June 1995); and Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 148–205. On rereading Fanon in relation to Algeria today, see the end of this article.

¹² Albert Camus, *L'étranger* (Paris, 1942), trans. as *The Stranger* (New York, 1946); *La peste* (Paris, 1947), trans. as *The Plague* (New York, 1948); *L'homme revolte* (Paris, 1951), trans. as *The Rebel* (New York, 1954).

¹³ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Camus* (London, 1970); Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993), 169–85. Although Said acknowledges and builds on Cruise O'Brien's earlier pioneering study, he takes it further.

¹⁴ In Albert Camus, *L'exil et le royaume* (Paris, 1957), trans. as "The Adulterous Woman," *Exile and the Kingdom* (New York, 1957).

side during a sleepless night in a small hotel in the Algerian countryside . . . The climax of the story is a remarkable, almost pantheistic communion she has with the sky and the desert . . . Camus's intention is to present the relationship between woman and geography in sexual terms."¹⁵ Significantly, Janine achieves communion not with an Algerian but with the land of Algeria.

In this story collection, Camus comes closest to staging the colonial encounter, the relations between Europeans and Algerians, but he does not inquire into the origins or history of colonialism in Algeria.¹⁶ According to Said, "Camus neither disputes nor dissents from the campaigns for sovereignty waged against the Algerian Muslims for over a hundred years." Said grants that Camus was "a moral man in an immoral situation," but this very even-handedness makes Said's final verdict all the more damning. "Because there was always the more difficult and challenging alternative of first judging, then refusing France's territorial seizure and political sovereignty, blocking as it did a compassionate, shared understanding of Algerian nationalism, Camus's limitations seem unacceptably paralyzing."¹⁷

Said on Camus constitutes one example of how historical and literary perspectives together can illuminate a colonial text. Another example is Cagayous of Algiers.

THE LITERARY CHARACTER Cagayous constitutes one of the primary, if not the primary, European representations of Algeria. Standing on the docks of Algiers with a mosque outlined in the background, Cagayous attired in his trademark cap strikes a truculent pose (Figure 1). While Cagayous' literary relatives include such picaresque figures as Rabelais' Panurge and Victor Hugo's Gavroche, in colonial Algeria Cagayous was the most popular of these types.¹⁸ And I will argue that he provides the greatest insight into the colonial society that spawned him. The publication of the Cagayous tales between 1894 and 1920 coincides with the emergence of the Algerian *roman colonial* or colonial novel.¹⁹ Albert Camus is the best-known writer produced by colonial Algeria, yet there was a whole series of practitioners in Algeria of the colonial novel. One theme of these writers is,

¹⁵ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 176.

¹⁶ But see his unfinished novel published posthumously, *Le premier homme* (Paris, 1994). Earlier, Camus had flatly asserted, "There has never yet been an Algerian nation," reprising the famous debate between Ferhat Abbas and Ben Badis in the 1930s, yet Said argues that such a declaration presumes "that the ravages of French policy had wiped the slate clean." Albert Camus, *Essais* (Paris, 1965), 1012–13, quoted in Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 179.

¹⁷ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 181, 174, 185.

¹⁸ Pierre Mille, "Quand Panurge ressuscita," *Cahiers de la quinzaine*, Ser. 9, cahier 16 (June 30, 1908): 146–56; Mille, "L'illustre Cagayous," *Les nouvelles littéraires* (April 17, 1930); Mille, "Sur Musette, l'auteur de 'Cagayous,'" *La dépêche coloniale* (October 28, 1930): 1; Lilian Husson, "Cagayous, Fils de Bab el Oued" (typewritten manuscript in possession of the author, 1947); Aimé Dupuy, "Les enfances Cagayous," *Journal des Instituteurs de l'Afrique du Nord*, no. 5 (November 22, 1947): 66–67, 79; Dupuy, "Les 'écoles' de Cagayous," *Journal des Instituteurs de l'Afrique du Nord*, no. 7 (December 20, 1947): 98–99; and Gabriel Audisio, introduction, Auguste Robinet [Musette], *Cagayous: Ses meilleures histoires* (Paris, 1931), 7–40.

¹⁹ On the colonial novel, see Alain Calmes, *Le roman colonial en Algérie avant 1914* (Paris, 1984); Hubert Gourdon, Jean-Robert Henry, and Françoise Henry-Lorcerie, "Roman colonial et idéologie coloniale en Algérie," *Revue algérienne des sciences juridiques, économiques et politiques*, 11 (1974): 7–252; and Jean Déjeux, *La littérature algérienne contemporaine* (Paris, 1975).

significantly, the birth of a "new race," by which they refer to the *pieds noirs*, the amalgam of Europeans that formed a settler society.²⁰ But the Algerians are absent; most colonial novels feature the better-off native French. By contrast, the Cagayous tales highlight the lower-class *pieds noirs*—generally Spanish, Italians, Maltese—the *petits blancs*, poor whites.²¹ Particularly revealing is that Cagayous and his cronies speak *pataouète*, the French dialect invented by the European settlers in Algeria.²² As the colonial society of Algeria formed late in the nineteenth century, so, too, did the language its members increasingly spoke.

Historically, the characters of the Cagayous tales exemplify the formation of a distinctive settler colonial society in Algeria between 1890 and 1914. As I have argued elsewhere, French colonialism in Algeria took the form of settler colonialism.²³ Colonial Algerian society included French, Spanish, Italian, Maltese, and other European settlers but excluded Jews, as well as native Arabs and Berbers. Algerians outnumbered Europeans six to one in Algeria as a whole, but in the area along the Mediterranean coast where the European settlers concentrated in the largest Algerian cities, there were two Europeans for each Algerian.²⁴ In the Algiers of Cagayous, Europeans outnumbered Algerians three to one in a total population of 145,280.²⁵ Together, the port cities of Algiers, Oran, and Bône played a dis-

²⁰ Numerous visitors to Algeria at the time noted the birth of a "new race," including André Gide. See his *Amyntas* (Paris, 1905), 123–24. The political history of the term *pied noir* lies at the center of my concerns in this essay. Since it did not come into general use until around World War II, to use it earlier is technically anachronistic. Cagayous and the European settlers often described themselves as "Algerians," and they termed the Algerians *indigènes* (indigenous peoples). Only with the rise of Algerian nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s was "Algerian" increasingly applied to Algerians and *pied noir* to the Europeans. Although *pied noir* has been interpreted as somewhat disparaging, I use it interchangeably with "settler" in this essay, because it is the single most widely used term for the European settlers of colonial Algeria.

²¹ Besides Robinet, only Louis Bertrand and John Antoine Nau featured the *petits blancs*. Others who worked the picaresque vein include Stephen Chaserau and Paul Achard.

²² On *pataouète*, see Albert Lanly, *Le Français d'Afrique du nord: Etude linguistique* (Paris, 1962); Roland Bacri, *Trésors des racines pataouètes* (Paris, 1983); Bacri, "Le pataouète," in Lucien and Myriam Elia, eds., *Les pieds-noirs* (Paris, 1982), 89–96; Aimé Dupuy, "Le Français d'Afrique du Nord," *Vie et langage* (January 1960): 2–11; and Pierre Pérégo, "Quelques remarques à propos du français parlé en Algérie," *La pensée* (January–February 1960): 90–95.

²³ David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870–1920* (New York, 1990); Prochaska, "Making Algeria French and Unmaking French Algeria," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 3 (1990): 305–28; and Prochaska, "Tales of the City: Between *Algérie française* and *Algérie algérienne*," in Daniel Segal, ed., *Crossing Cultures: Essays in the Displacement of "Western Civilization"* (Tucson, Ariz., 1992), 182–225.

²⁴ By 1900, 60 percent of all Europeans lived in towns. On colonial Oran, see René Lespès, *Oran: Etude de géographie et d'histoire urbaine* (Paris, 1938), Graphique V; on colonial Bône, see Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*; and on colonial Algiers, note 31 below. By way of contrast, only 2 percent of the population of colonial Delhi was European in 1921, only 5 percent of colonial Cairo in 1897, and 20–35 percent of colonial Casablanca during the period 1913–1952. Anthony D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power, and Environment* (London, 1976), 232; Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* (Princeton, N.J., 1971), 98; André Adam, *Casablanca*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1972), 149.

²⁵ Gouvernement Général de l'Algérie, *Tableau général des communes de l'Algérie* (Algiers, 1908), 2–3. In 1907, Algerians numbered 33,250 (23 percent). Fanon imagined no more Manichean a site than colonial cities like Algiers. "The colonial world is a world cut in two . . . The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers . . . The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings . . . The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They

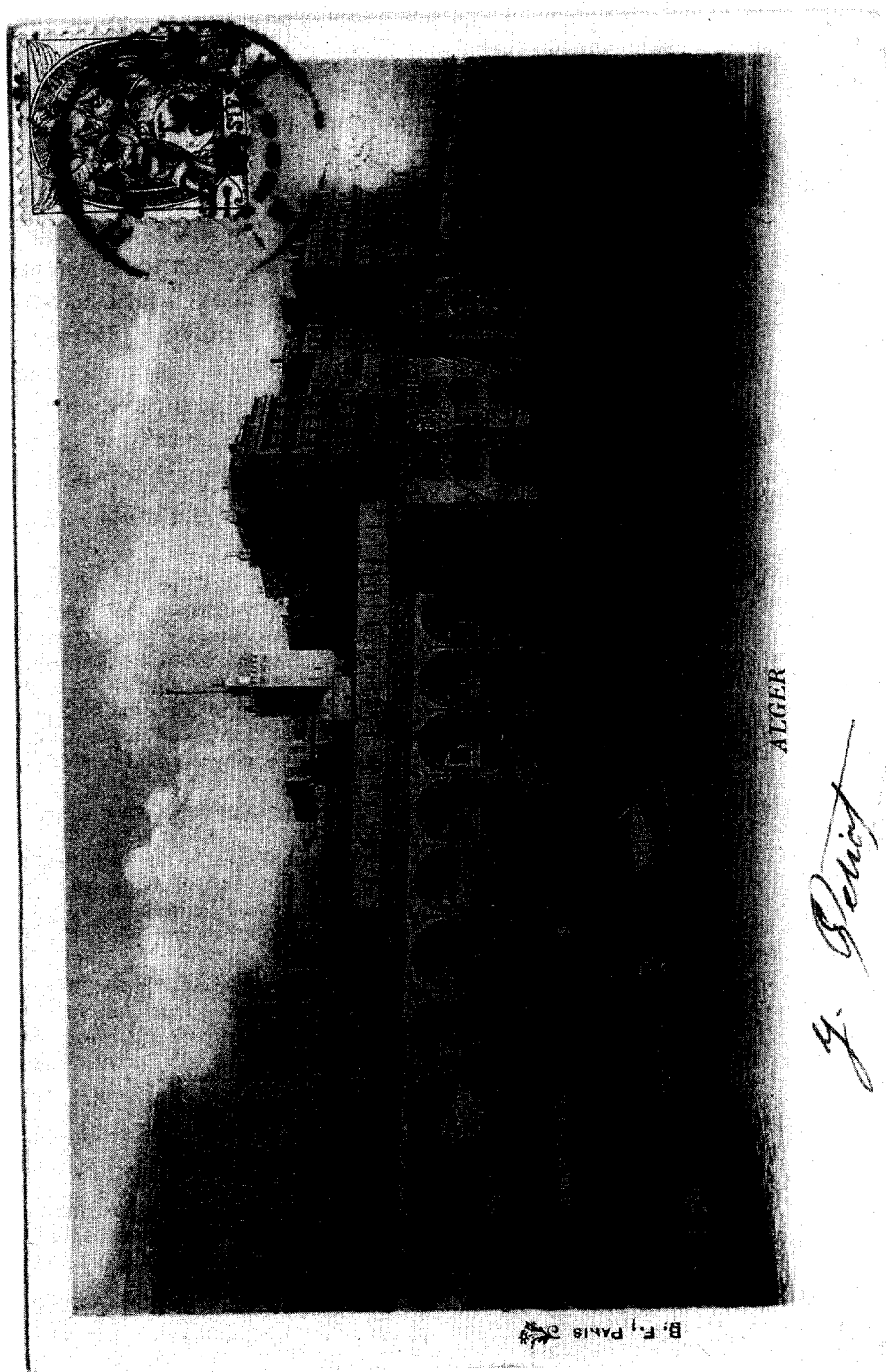


FIGURE 2: "Algier" (B.F., Paris). (All postcards are from the author's collection.) In the background of this view of the port stands the Djama el Kebir, the main mosque in Algiers. Signed on the front by the sender, this card was mailed October 31, 1904, to a correspondent in Paris.

proportionately large role in assuring settler predominance throughout Algeria. An early twentieth-century postcard clearly underscores activity at the port of Algiers (Figure 2). Settler colonialism in Algeria was, therefore, the necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for the creation of settler colonial culture; in turn, colonial culture contributed to the formation of settler society.

CAGAYOUS' CREATOR WAS AUGUSTE ROBINET (1862–1930). His background is sketchy. Born and died in Algiers. Both parents French. Nothing known about mother. Father a typesetter and Arabic translator. Orphaned at an early age. Thanks to a benevolent uncle, he attended secondary school, where he displayed an interest in philology and earned a reputation as “a walking encyclopedia.”²⁶

Robinet came from one of the oldest areas of Algiers, the Marine and former Préfecture districts; he was born just off the central Place du Gouvernement (renamed by the Algerians Place des Martyrs). The map in Figure 3 shows how the European city grew up around, very nearly surrounding, the Algerian quarter, the Casbah. After they invaded in 1830, the French commandeered mostly Moorish-style buildings for administrative offices in the Marine and other downtown districts. The French did not take over the Mosquée de la Pêcherie (Djama el Djedid), but they did establish their central square, the Place du Gouvernement, contiguous to it. An equestrian statue in the square of the duke of Orléans, King Louis Philippe's son who had fought in Algeria, symbolically inscribed French hegemony at what had been the center of Muslim Algiers (Figure 4).²⁷ At the time of Robinet's birth, therefore, central Algiers was still an ethnic potpourri in which different groups lived alongside but apart from each other. The postcard view (Figure 5) of the beginning of the Rue de la Marine suggests this, with the corner of the Mosquée de la Pêcherie in the right foreground and the twin European edifices standing at the beginning of the block and next to the mosque. The Marine and former Préfecture districts were the most heavily Italian neighborhoods of Algiers.²⁸ Yet the fountain for ablutions was used by Muslims for ritual washing prior to performing prayers (Figure 6).

Colonial Algiers grew by radiating outward from these downtown port districts. As outlying neighborhoods took on particular ethnic colorations, so the population mix of the downtown areas also changed. Initially, the Italian Marine district bor-

are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where or how.” *Wretched of the Earth*, 38–39.

²⁶ Max Lamouche, “Un publiciste sociologue algérois: Musette,” *Revue de la Méditerranée*, 4 (1947): 545.

²⁷ The symbolic significance with which these hunks of stone were imbued certainly rubbed off on the Algerians. Fanon understood; he writes that the colonial world is “a world of statues: the statue of the general who carried out the conquest, the statue of the engineer who built the bridge; a world which is sure of itself, which crushes with its stones the backs flayed by whips.” *Wretched of the Earth*, 51–52.

²⁸ In walking “this labyrinth of a quarter, you encountered the speech, mores, and odors of the lower parts [*bassi*], warehouses [*fondaci*], and alleys [*vicoli*] of Naples.” René Lespès, *Alger: Etude de géographie et d'histoire urbaines* (Paris, 1930), 578. For more recent studies, see Farouk Benatia, *Alger: Agrégat ou cité; L'intégration citadine à Alger* (Algiers, 1980); Djaffar Lesbet, *La Casbah d'Alger* (Algiers, 1985); and Maria Sgroi-Dufresne, *Alger 1830–1984* (Paris, 1986), esp. chap. 1.

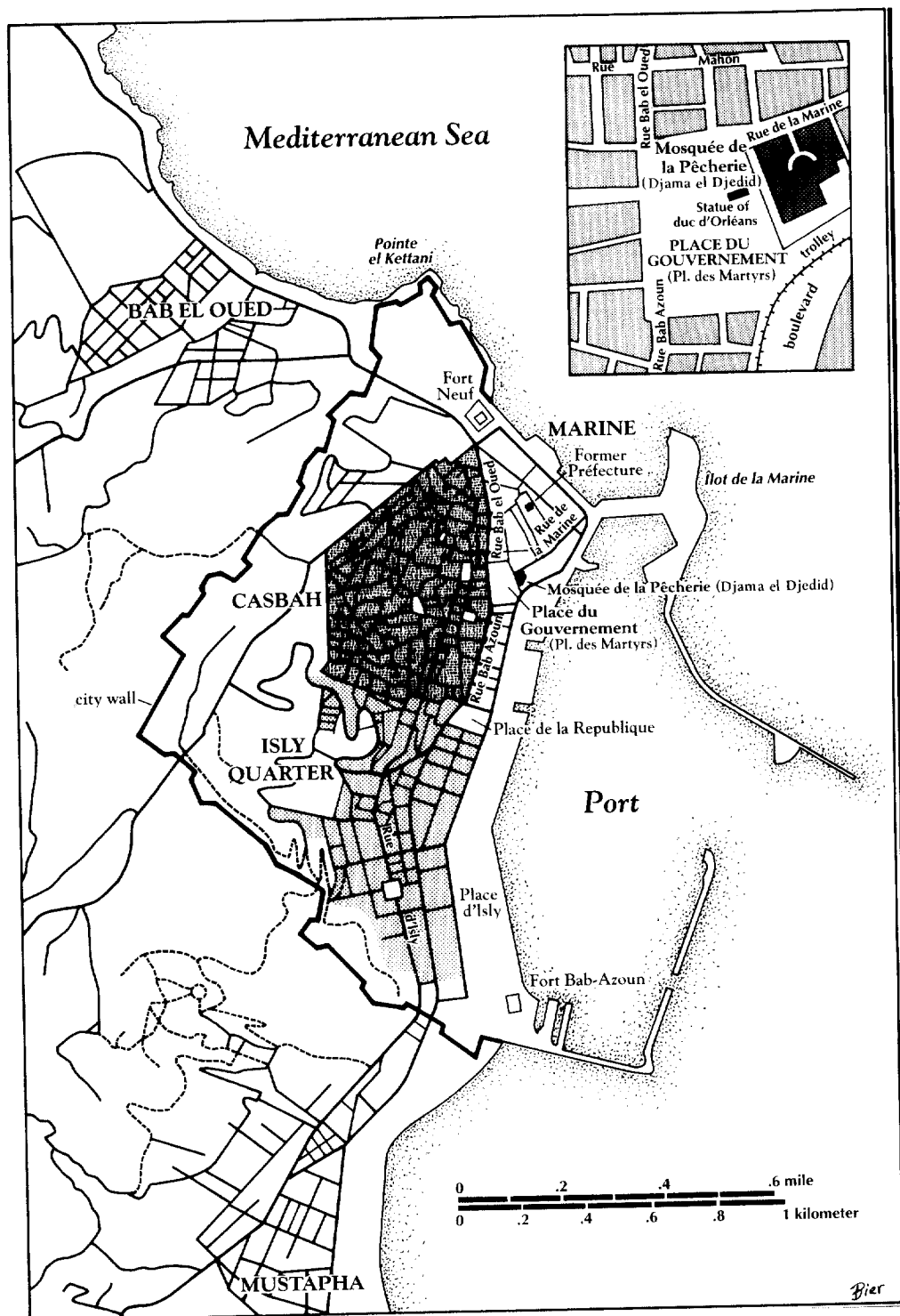


FIGURE 3: A map of Algiers *circa* 1900, cartographer James A. Bier. The center of colonial Algiers was the Place du Gouvernement, bordered on one side by the Mosquée de la Pêche (Djama el Djedid). The Marine district, birthplace of Auguste Robinet, and the Muslim Casbah were the oldest parts of the city. As Algiers grew in population, it expanded south, where the mostly French Isly quarter contrasted starkly with the Casbah, and to the northwest, where the working-class European Bab el Oued neighborhood arose.



FIGURE 4: "9. Alger.—La Place du Gouvernement" (Neurdein Frères, Paris). View of the central square, with the Mosquée de la Pêcherie on the right, European-style buildings on the left, and an equestrian statue of the duke of Orléans in the center. Neurdein Frères was one of the largest postcard publishers of the time. Issued before 1904, this view was no. 9 of the 170 postcard views and 9 panoramas of Algiers—including no less than 13 of the Place du Gouvernement—available from Neurdein in 1904–1905.

dered the Muslim Casbah to the west. From the northwest corner of the Place du Gouvernement, the Rue Bab el Oued led to the neighborhood of the same name, located to the north and heavily Spanish in composition (see Figure 3). South from the southwest side of the Place du Gouvernement began the Rue Bab Azoun, along which the Jews clustered. This street terminated at the Place de la République (today, Square Port Said). Not far to the southwest of this square could be found the Rue d'Isly (today, Rue Ben M'Hidi Larbi), which gave its name to this predominantly French quarter.²⁹

The move outward from the original city was already under way at the time of Robinet's birth, as the city's business center gravitated south toward Rue Bab Azoun and northwest toward Rue Bab el Oued. The commercial nature of Rue Bab Azoun is clearly evident in the postcard view of the street, with advertising signs on

²⁹ In one of the key defeats of the Algerian resistance led by Abd al Qadir, General Thomas Robert Bugeaud won the battle of the Wadi (River) Isly in 1844 and was later raised to the peerage as duke of Isly. After independence in 1962, the Algerians changed the name of the Rue d'Isly and renamed the Place Bugeaud the "Place Amir Abd al Qadir."



FIGURE 5: "190 Alger.—Entrée de la rue de la Marine" (J. Geiser, Algiers). Looking northwest toward the harbor, the Mosquée de la Pêcherie is on the right, and the Djama el Kebir can be seen in the left background. Note the mix of people, from the European woman in the right foreground to the two Muslim men on the far left. J. Geiser was a photographer based in Algiers who consistently produced high-quality work. The "entrée de la rue de la Marine" was one of numerous stock views that turn up on postcards produced by other publishers.

the façade of the building on the left and the goods for purchase along the arcade of the building in the right foreground (Figure 7). As Europeans fled the city center, even more Algerians moved in to replace them. Thus Italians rubbed shoulders



FIGURE 6: "59. Alger.—Fontaine des Ablutions rue de la Marine" (Collection Idéale). Such fountains were not found on public streets, as the caption here suggests, but inside the mosque compound, which is considered a sanctuary (*haram*). Note the vaulted arches and wall tiles. Of more than a hundred publishers of colonial Algerian postcards, Collection Idéale was among the ten most prominent. This card was produced before 1904.

increasingly with Algerians, all living in "deplorable conditions of hygiene."³⁰ While Europeans increased 44 percent between 1901 and 1926 in the Marine and former

³⁰ Lespès, *Alger: Etude de géographie*, 578.

Préfecture quarters, Algerians burgeoned 139 percent. Population density climbed until it was second only to that of the Casbah.³¹ In the Casbah, the stepped streets, residential architecture, and dress of the inhabitants all differed from the European neighborhoods (Figure 8).

Upon finishing school in Algiers, Robinet joined the colonial administration. After a stint in Constantine, the leading city of eastern Algeria, he was named inspector of foundlings for the *département* of Algiers, a position he held until retirement. His job brought him into daily contact with the predominantly Spanish population of Bab el Oued. Soon he moved to that neighborhood, and later he wrote about the *pièds noirs* who lived there.³² Thus Robinet's successive moves in Algiers recapitulated the city's expansion. At first, Bab el Oued was physically isolated, and its reputation was as poor as its population. What turned the area around was the growing commercial and industrial prosperity of the capital. As the colonial economy expanded, Europeans, especially working-class Spanish, moved to Bab el Oued.³³ Central Algiers grew 43 percent in population from 1896 to 1926, but Bab el Oued jumped 103 percent.³⁴ Much later, during the Algerian Revolution, Bab el Oued became the home ground of the infamous Organisation de l'Armée Secrète, French Algeria diehards who mounted a last-ditch stand against Algerians fighting for independence.

Beyond the fact that Robinet earned a living independent of writing—a career pattern reminiscent of other artists, such as Wallace Stevens and Charles Ives—we know little about his non-literary activities.³⁵ An early biographer asks all the right questions: “Should we relate this invention [Cagayous] to the author’s professional interest in foundlings? Should we attribute it to the impressions of a childhood spent two steps from the Place du Gouvernement, at the time the vital center of Algiers, intersection of the five great French, Jewish, Muslim, Spanish and Italian-Maltese neighborhoods?”³⁶ Surely there are connections, but we cannot spell them out with precision. What is clear is that Robinet began writing at the same time he was becoming a career civil servant. From age twenty, he contributed short pieces to an Algiers newspaper, which he signed “Tête d’âne” (Donkey Head). In 1888, one of the leading figures in colonial Algerian journalism, Ernest Mallebay, founded a newspaper and made Robinet responsible for a column, which he wrote under the pseudonym “Rob.” Robinet later followed Mallebay to *Le Turco*,

³¹ Lespès, *Alger: Etude de géographie*, 405–06, 409, 524–26, 560, 578, 785. Percentage increases during 1901–1926 are for the first district (*arrondissement*), which includes the areas of the Marine, former Préfecture, and Rue Bab el Oued. In this district in 1881, 304 people lived per hectare, in 1901, 596, and in 1926, 871. In the densest parts of the quarter, there were 1,376 individuals per hectare in 1926.

³² Lamouche, “Un publiciste: Musette,” 543; René Lespès, *Alger: Esquisse de géographie urbaine* (Algiers, 1925), graph 2, 89; Lespès, *Alger: Etude de géographie*, 558, 566–67. A mere 800 Algerians, or 3 percent, lived in Bab el Oued in 1926. Furthermore, Bab el Oued was 26 percent French in 1906, compared to 59 percent of central Algiers and 69 percent of the predominantly French d’Isly quarter.

³³ Whereas old Algiers hands termed the Marine quarter *le petit Naples*, Bab el Oued was referred to as *la petite Espagne*. Lespès, *Alger: Etude de géographie*, 573.

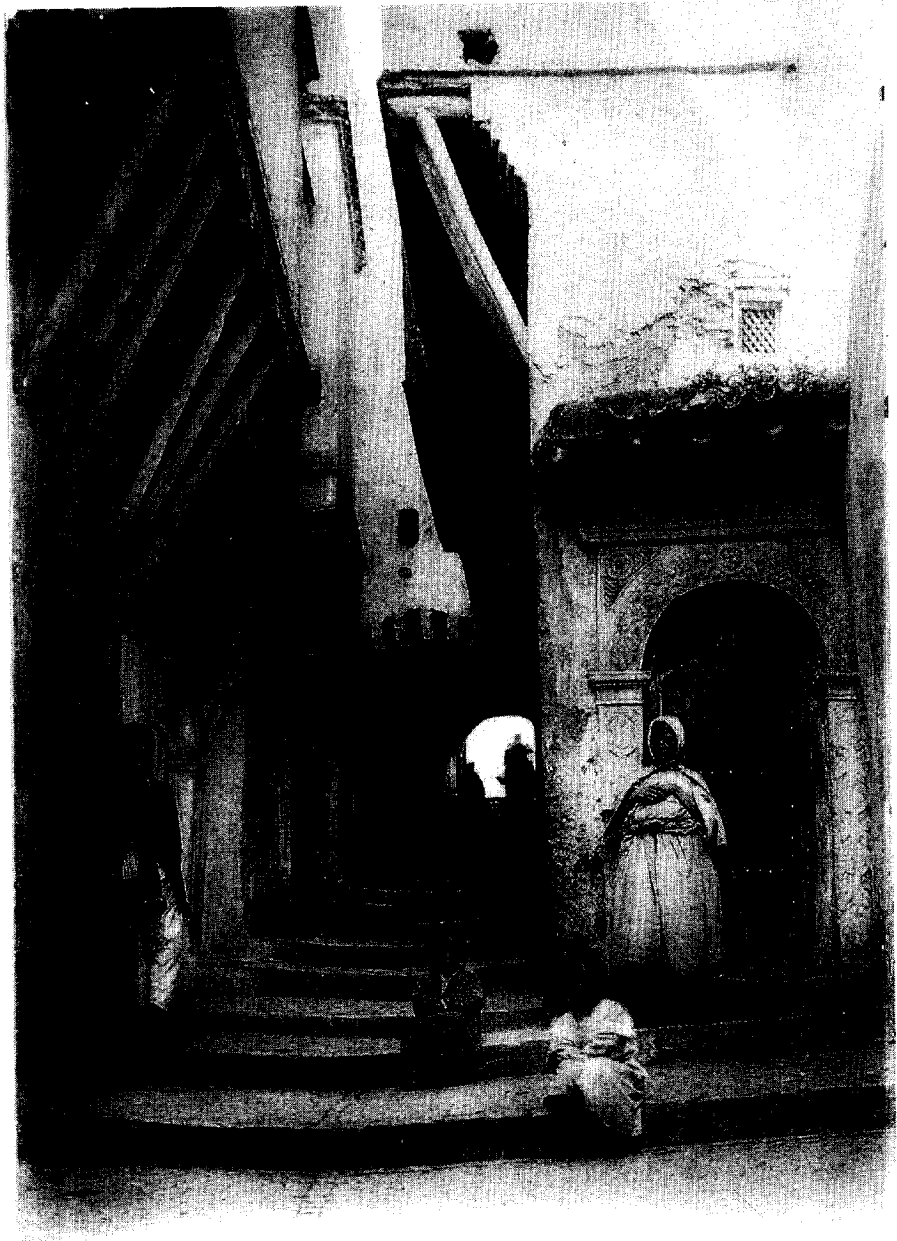
³⁴ Lespès, *Alger: Etude de géographie*, 344, 384–85, 405–06, 500, 530, 532.

³⁵ Robinet played the piano and flute, and composed on occasion. He was a *bricoleur* (handyman); he maintained a fully equipped shop and was a founding member of “L’Automobile Club d’Alger.” Lamouche, “Un publiciste: Musette,” 546.

³⁶ Lamouche, “Un publiciste: Musette,” 543–44, quote on 544.



FIGURE 7: "274. Alger.—Rue Bab-Azoun" (Collection Idéale). The sender has written his initials and the date, January 12, 1906. There is no mention of the scene depicted on the postcard.



37 ALGER. — La Rue du Chameau. — L.L.

FIGURE 8: "37 Alger.—La Rue du Chameau" (L. Levy, Paris). Upper stories corbeled over the stepped street provide additional living space. L. Levy, one of the top two or three French postcard publishers by volume, is also notable for its high-quality work.

the leading satirical journal of the day.³⁷ He contributed to several publications

³⁷ Mallebay (1859–1939) was a professor of history at the College of Blida until 1887, when he went into journalism, founding *La revue algérienne* and *Le Turco*. Mallebay was a Radical Republican and anti-Semite. Louis Montoy, "La presse dans le département de Constantine (1870–1918)," 3 vols.

and employed a number of pseudonyms: Musette (his best-known), Rob, Jean de l'Agha, and Piccolo.

As for the choice of the definitive pseudonym "Musette," no one knows the motives. Perhaps the rustic musical instrument of the same name symbolized the rude character of the puppets which he brought to life for his readers and his own diversion? Perhaps it evoked the bucolic charm of the life he dreamt of as an artist?³⁸

Again, we do not know. What we do know is that the first Cagayous adventure appeared on March 3, 1895, in *Le Turco*, and the first collection came out the same year. Successive tales appeared until 1920, published first either as newspaper serials or as sixteen-page chapbooks and then reissued in collections.³⁹ Often sold out in bookstores, they were unavailable for a time from libraries in the capital. These tales, which "everyone reads and no one keeps," were immediately and continuously popular, a "wild success."⁴⁰ In 1896, 12,000 copies of one adventure were sold in a single afternoon. "Eyewitnesses recall that long lines formed at kiosks waiting for the delivery of the serials, which rapidly sold out."⁴¹ As a result, the Cagayous character soon passed into popular mythology: Cagayous caps were marketed, the popular theater mounted Cagayous skits, and popular songs celebrated him. In one column, Cagayous reports that a tobacco seller has asked his permission to put Cagayous' name and picture on cigarettes.⁴² Cagayous was worked into ads in which he endorsed anisette: "I only drink Anis-Capo!"⁴³ In an exchange in the newspaper, a group of wine cellarmen (*cavistes*) wrote that they wanted to meet Cagayous, the editor in turn "contacted" Cagayous, "Cagayous" accepted their invitation, and their get-together was staged in the following issue.⁴⁴ In short, "the popularity [of Cagayous] is incontestable . . . In colonial Algerian literature, the case of Musette is unique: he was the only author to have a public at the core of the settler colony [*colonie de peuplement*] and a real audience."⁴⁵

ONE REASON FOR THE POPULARITY OF CAGAYOUS was the language he spoke, *pataouète*. The name *pataouètes*, or potato eaters, referred to Spanish immigrants to Algiers.⁴⁶ A dialect of French, *pataouète* was quintessentially a language of the cities

(Thèse de doctorat, Université de Provence, 1982), 1: 766, 2: 1099, 1267. Lamouche states incorrectly that Robinet moved to *Le Turco* in 1896, whereas the first Cagayous pieces were already appearing there in 1895. See Lamouche, "Un publiciste: Musette," 543.

³⁸ Lamouche, "Un publiciste: Musette," 545. A *musette* is a small, bellows-filled bagpipe popular especially in the eighteenth century.

³⁹ See Appendix: Cagayous Publication Data in Chronological Order at the end of this article.

⁴⁰ Emile-Félix Gautier, "Les émeutes antijuives en Algérie," in *L'Algérie et la métropole* (Paris, 1920), 203; and Audisio, introduction, Robinet, *Cagayous*, 15.

⁴¹ Interview with Edmond Charlot cited in Paul Siblot, "Pères spirituels et mythes fondateurs de l'Algérianisme," in Martine Mathieu, ed., *Le roman colonial* (Paris, 1987), 52.

⁴² "Pochades algériennes: Cigarettes Cagayous," *Le Turco* (October 30, 1896).

⁴³ Auguste Robinet, *Le mariage de Cagayous* (Algiers, 1906), advertisement before 49.

⁴⁴ "Pochades algériennes: Bibliographie," *Le Turco* (May 5, 1895); "Pochades algériennes: Cagayous au caveau," *Le Turco* (May 12, 1895).

⁴⁵ Siblot, "Pères spirituels," 52-53.

⁴⁶ "Not so many years ago, many [Spanish] immigrants came [to Algiers] on fishing boats [*balancelles*] transporting water jugs. They disembarked carrying an enormous bag; in local parlance they were

rather than the countryside, and of the colonial port cities besides. Algerian ports were not the only Mediterranean ones that developed a distinctive lingua franca, but the Algerian case is distinctive because the European settler community was sufficiently large and long lived to develop its own dialect of French. Elsewhere, the lingua franca was referred to most often as *sabir*, which originated much earlier and mixed French, Spanish, Italian, and Arabic in a way that facilitated communication in Algeria and elsewhere in the Mediterranean, typically between Muslim and Christian.⁴⁷ The language of power, the power of language: as French colonialism took root, French replaced *sabir*, fewer and fewer Europeans spoke less and less Arabic, but, instead of mastering French, the *pieds noirs* invented *pataouète*.

In Algeria, *pataouète* differed in different parts of the country—from Algiers and Oran in the west, where Spanish predominated, to the east, where Italian was heard most often in the ports of Stora, Philippeville, and especially Bône. It differed by social group, too. As one commentator remarks, “The colony being constituted little by little into classes and castes, fairly serious differences are revealed between these classes and castes by language.”⁴⁸ It is no coincidence that *pataouète* developed first as a spoken language and only later came to be written down. When it was, dictionaries and glossaries were frequently appended to the texts to facilitate comprehension. Emile-Félix Gautier, a historian at the University of Algiers and early fan of Cagayous, argued that Robinet transcribed onto paper what he had heard on the streets of Bab el Oued. “He [Robinet] has, if one can say so, phonographed [*phonographiée*] these plebeians.”⁴⁹ Further, *pataouète* is a language of gestures; it cannot be fully comprehended without the gesticulations that accompany the words and complete the thoughts.⁵⁰

named ‘snails.’ More crudely, they were referred to as ‘potato eaters.’” Lespès, *Alger: Etude de géographie*, 571, n. 1.

⁴⁷ Lanly, *Le Français d'Afrique du nord*. On Algerian *sabir*, see M. Hadj Sadok, “Dialects arabes et francisation linguistique en Algérie,” *Annales de l'Institut d'Etudes Orientales* (Algiers, 1955), 61–97; and Louis Brunot, “Sabirs,” *Journal des Instituteurs d'Afrique du Nord*, 1 (April 1948): 209–10.

⁴⁸ Dupuy, “Le Français d'Afrique du Nord,” 5. In a rough-and-ready manner, Dupuy distinguishes the *pataouète* spoken by fishermen, truck drivers, farmers, Jews, and the urban working class. He refers to Cagayous’ *pataouète*, rooted in such working-class neighborhoods as the Calère in Oran and the Cantera and Bab el Oued in Algiers, as “le langage cagayoussien.” Other commentators reserve the term *pataouète* for the heavily Spanish version spoken in western Algeria and refer to the Italian-dominated Bône variant as “le Bônois.” Although I follow most commentators in using *pataouète* here for the versions of French spoken in Algeria, insufficient attention is generally paid in the literature to geographical, ethnic, socioeconomic, and especially oral versus written differences. In the most substantial book-length study, *Le Français d'Afrique du nord*, Lanly notes but does not systematically pursue such variations and, more seriously, uses later published texts as data of earlier oral practices despite the fact that, as Siblot points out, “literary texts cannot furnish *linguistic facts*, but only *facts of linguistic representation*.” Paul Siblot, “Mises en texte de la pluriglossie dans la littérature coloniale,” *Cahiers de praxématique* (Montpellier), no. 5 (1985): 108, emphasis in original.

⁴⁹ Gautier, “Les émeutes antijuives,” 199. For glossaries, see Bacri, “Dictionnaire,” *Trésors*, 20–183; Audisio, “Lexique,” in Robinet, *Cagayous*, 251–65; Edmond Brua, “Petit glossaire,” in *Fables bônoises* (Paris, 1972), 209–13; Louis Lafourcade, “Glossaire,” in *Harmonies bônoises* (Algiers, n.d.), 35–44; and Husson, “Petit lexique pour non avertis,” in “Cagayous,” 45–46.

⁵⁰ Audisio writes, for example, that “when a personage cries ‘Tiens!’ every good Mediterranean sees the obscene presentation of the arm, of the hand, or of the finger which corresponds to those fruits symbolic in every regard to the people who live on the coast of the Latin sea; the fig and the olive.” Audisio, introduction, Robinet, *Cagayous*, 23, emphasis in original. For the northern shore of the Mediterranean, see Laurence Wylie, *Beaux Gestes: A Guide to French Body Talk* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977).

Cagayous' language borrows heavily from Arabic, Spanish, and Italian.⁵¹ Of 600 foreign words, 210 are from Arabic, 180 from Spanish, 60 from Italian, and 70 from the patois, or dialect, spoken in southern France from Provence to Languedoc. From Spanish, Italian, and Arabic, Cagayous borrowed exclamations and obscenities first and foremost. Cagayous has a dirty mouth. Throughout the Mediterranean, the fig and the tomato are used figuratively for a woman's genitalia, and the *pataouète* Cagayous speaks plays on this. Algiers borders on the sea, and Cagayous borrows vocabulary from Mediterranean languages for fish, fishing gear, boats, bait, winds, and maneuvers. In addition to using nautical terms, Cagayous expresses himself in nautical images. He does not sew a button, he lashes it. Instead of *prendre racine*, to take root, he says *prendre mouillage*, to drop anchor.

Cagayous alters words to render them intelligible to his friends, deforming and disfiguring French in the process. *Celui-là* becomes *çuilà*; *voilà* becomes *oilà*; *avec* becomes *vec*. Cagayous collapses syllables and words together, as in *Bablouette* for *Bab el Oued*, *domoizan* for *donne-moi-s'en*, *danse sanguide* for *danse de Saint-Guy*. More important, *pataouète* modifies French grammar and syntax. Cagayous often changes transitive verbs to pronominal ones, which emphasize that he is the one performing some activity, for example, *se penser* for *penser*, *se manger* for *manger*. He uses the active voice and avoids the passive, conditional, and subjunctive whenever possible. Living in the here and now, he avoids the past and future tenses and opts for the present. Better to express himself, he inverts proper subject-verb order to place the object or attribute of a verb at the beginning of a sentence. Thus he says "fool that I am" instead of "I am a fool." Lastly, Cagayous uses run-on sentences, maybe because he knows no better but perhaps merely because he wants to, as in the following. "Another girl who was fourteen or fifteen years old around there and who all the time she moves, she jumps up and down, she goes through so many antics that she makes a fish squirming in a basket seem like nothing, her mother had more than ten doctors come to see what was the matter and they all told her it was St. Vitus' dance, that's all!"⁵²

Cagayous' language can be interpreted as the untutored, broken French of a lower-class person with little formal schooling. But it can also be seen as exemplifying many of the character traits often ascribed collectively to the *pieds noirs*. They are said to have a strong sense of the concrete; sensual by nature, they seek pleasure, *faire le kif*, especially in the sun and sea—themes established in the colonial novel long before Camus' *L'étranger*. They are full of pride, both in the sense of feeling superior to the Algerians and in the virile pride associated with Mediterranean machismo, the male member at its crudest, the whole complex of honor and shame.⁵³ Although such stereotypes are just that, many of these traits do

⁵¹ On Cagayous' language, see Lanly, *Le Français d'Afrique du nord*; Audisio, introduction, Robinet, *Cagayous*, 7–40, 251–65; and Bacri, *Trésors*.

⁵² Auguste Robinet, *Au miracle* (Algiers, 1905), 2. "Une aute fille qu'elle a 14–15 ans comme ça et que tout le temps elle bouge, elle saute, elle fait des galipettes qu'une girelle dedans le couffin c'est rien, sa mère elle y a porté pluss de dix médecins pour voir ça que c'est et tous on l'y a dit que c'est la danse sanguide basta!"

⁵³ See, among other works, J. Davis, *People of the Mediterranean: An Essay in Comparative Social Anthropology* (London, 1977); J. G. Peristiany, ed., *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (London, 1965); and Jane Schneider, "Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honor, Shame and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Societies," *Ethnology*, 10 (1971): 1–24.

resonate in Cagayous' language. Pronominal verbs and subject-verb inversions make discourse more energetic. The present indicative lends more vivacity to speech. Certainly, there seems to be an elective affinity between Cagayous' *pataouète* speech and his literary persona.

SO WHO IS CAGAYOUS? He is "the biggest *voyou* [hustler] of Algiers."⁵⁴ He is his name. "Cagayous" is a portmanteau word consisting of *lagagnous* blended with *cagaille*. *Lagagnous* (Languedocian; in Spanish, *leganoso*) means rheumy or gummy and is applied to Cagayous "because he had stuff in his eyes." *Cagaille* (Provençal, *cagaïoun*, or little turd) is the runs, the shits.⁵⁵

It should be clear by now, Cagayous is firmly anchored in Algiers; he cannot be understood aside from his particular place. As pointed out above, Algiers was not an Algerian but a European city, in which European colonizers outnumbered colonized Algerians three to one between 1881 and 1926.⁵⁶ Yet Cagayous' Algiers is not coterminous with Algiers the largest city in Algeria, the capital and headquarters of the colonial administration. As a *petit blanc*, Cagayous is from the predominantly working-class and Spanish Bab el Oued quarter, where in 1921 Spaniards comprised 25 percent of the population compared to their city-wide proportion of 10 percent. European in architecture, shade trees dotting the sidewalks, suburban Bab el Oued was linked with downtown Algiers by trolley car (Figure 9).

In the Cagayous adventures, Cagayous and his friends drift away from Bab el Oued toward the downtown districts, the Marine, the port, and the Place du Gouvernement. He has little occasion to venture into the districts built up on the hillsides farther away from the city center, where the fashionable French villas and sprawling embassy complexes are located today. Moreover, he visits the Casbah only infrequently, although it is closer. For Cagayous and his buddies, the Casbah is a place they make sorties into, but it is not a place they come from or spend much time in.

Cagayous' space *par excellence* is not the workplace, not the family home, but the street. We learn relatively little about the work he does—presumably because it is of little importance—and he spends little time at home. Instead, what fascinates him most is the street and what goes on there, the scams, inexpensive amusements, and free diversions the street offers. Cagayous' Algiers is a highly individualized city. By deemphasizing certain parts of the city and accentuating others, he practices his own sort of spatial segregation, which complements the prevailing residential segregation.⁵⁷ Cagayous defines social space thereby and creates social distance.

⁵⁴ Mille, "Quand Panurge ressuscite," 146.

⁵⁵ Audisio, introduction, Robinet, *Cagayous*, 9.

⁵⁶ Lespès, *Alger: Etude de géographie*, 494, 506, 517, 565, 570, 585. At certain times, the ratio was even more lopsided. In 1907, for example, the population consisted of 50,996 native French, 12,490 Jews, 26,305 naturalized French, 12,354 Spanish, 9,885 other Europeans, and 33,250 Algerians. Gouvernement Général de l'Algérie, *Tableau général des communes de l'Algérie*, 2–3.

⁵⁷ For a detailed study of residential segregation in another Algerian port city, see David Prochaska, "La ségrégation résidentielle en société coloniale: Le cas de Bône en Algérie de 1872 à 1954," *Cahiers d'histoire*, 25 (1980): 53–74.



FIGURE 9: "133. Bab-El-Oued. Avenue des Consuls" (Collection Idéale). The Bab el Oued quarter, where Auguste Robinet moved, and where his character Cagayous lived. This card was mailed from Algiers to Paris and dated June 7. The year is not discernible on the postmark, but it would be after 1904. No mention is made of the postcard photograph.

Cagayous spends little time with people other than his peers. Of his mother we hear little, of his father only that he is blind. With his sister Chicanelle, he spends more time, the two of them abusing each other verbally. Cagayous spends the bulk of his time with his friends, his gang. There is "Un qu'on lui dit l'haricot," the one called the bean, because he is always farting; Calcidone, the one with the big feet; Zérofranc, so named because he never has the money to pay for his round of drinks; Mecieu (Monsieur) Hoc, a retired postman and the only native Frenchman in Cagayous' circle; Solipane, literally "sun and bread"; Embrouilloun, from the Algerian argot for filching, petty theft; and "Un qu'on l'appelle La Tomate," the one called the tomato.⁵⁸ The proliferation of nicknames parallels the elaboration of walking the street; the names evoke the shared experiences, the exploits of Cagayous and his band.

Cagayous works only in order to "hang out" on the street. He does not have a career like the French who come from France. Instead, he drifts from job to job, from garbage collector to street sweeper to chauffeur to journalist. From collecting garbage to running for political office is but a jump, which Cagayous executes with his customary panache, as we shall see. On the job, a fight with a boss over a point of honor and he is fired, lack of work and he is laid off. No matter, he simply finds something else, no doubt through a friend or a friend of a friend. The work he does and the occupations he practices are treated cursorily and in little detail as befits a picaresque figure.

Manual labor, mostly unskilled, rapid job turnover—these features of Cagayous' jobs are characteristic of his friends' world of work as well. His buddy Mallard had been an officer in the army ambulance corps, then a public letter writer (*écrivain public*). "Then he worked as a charcoal burner, then he was a waiter in a restaurant in the repair yards, then he became a caulker [*calafat*] and scraped the bottoms of barges, then he sifted through the trash at Bablouette beach for iron and coins, then he dug for sand fleas with an old shovel and made fishing bait and lures with them [*koukra*], then he ran errands, then he worked on board a fishing boat, then he sold newspapers, then he sold *calentiita* [a kind of pastry] from a pushcart, then he was an undertaker's assistant, then he went back to hospital work."⁵⁹

For comic effect, Robinet exaggerates Mallard's occupational history—but not by much. Behind such a catalogue lay the economic history of colonial Algiers. The close connection between agriculture and industry meant that manufacturing arose primarily to process agricultural goods. As late as 1879, the sum total of Bab el Oued's industrial base consisted of "one flour mill, one foundry, one lime kiln, two soap and candle works, one absinthe distillery."⁶⁰ Then agricultural growth spurred port construction to export agricultural products, which in turn led to a construction boom, which created an entire neighborhood in Bab el Oued, *le quartier des Carrières* or in Spanish, *Cantera*. It was tobacco, however, that made Bab el Oued's economic fortune. Tobacco manufacture was the most successful industry born of

⁵⁸ Mille, "Quand Panurge ressuscite," 151–52; Auguste Robinet, *Cagayous candidat* (1902), rpt. in Robinet, *Cagayous*, 113–14. Compare also Robinet, *Cagayous*, 254, 256, 262.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Mille, "Quand Panurge ressuscite," 150–51.

⁶⁰ Charles Gouillon, *Annuaire administratif et commercial des trois départements de l'Algérie* (Algiers, 1877), 176–77, quoted in Lespès, *Alger: Etude de géographie*, 759.

Algerian agriculture, and Bab el Oued was the locus of the industry from the 1870s, especially from 1900.⁶¹

Just as Robinet exaggerated Mallard's succession of jobs, he also dwelled disproportionately on the bottom rungs of the occupational ladder. Even in Cagayous' poor-white milieu, however, there was a crude sort of socioeconomic pecking order. At the bottom of the bottom were the pickpockets (*sacatrapes*), the limeburners (*fourachaux*), and those who eked out a bare existence (*les fout-la-faim*). This is where you would find Robert Bresson's pickpocket as well as Nathaniel Hawthorne's limeburner Ethan Brand. One rung up the ladder were dockers such as the one named Chameleon, because he kept changing his color depending on what he was loading or unloading. At the top of Cagayous' occupational world were the petty shopkeepers such as his mother-in-law, Mme. Solano, who owned a small grocery. Despite its recent expansion, Bab el Oued still preserved in Cagayous' time the character of a small provincial town "where retail commerce was practiced almost exclusively in boutiques devoid of pretention."⁶² When Mme. Solano refuses to advance credit to Cagayous' sister, Chicanelle takes it as the insult it is intended to be. Providing credit is as important as selling merchandise in this small-scale commercial milieu. It is one of the primary means by which economic position is translated into political patronage, by which petty retailers become political brokers. And in the world of Cagayous, Mme. Solano, by virtue of her grocery, "belonged therefore to the aristocracy of this *peuple de gagne-petit* [petty wage earners]."⁶³

Cagayous' main occupation, however, is as the boss of his fellows. He is their acknowledged leader, the leader or mother (*mère*) of the pack. In the first place, walking down the street is an art; knowing when to brush taunts aside and when to challenge someone's manhood requires skill, a delicate reading of character, of intent. Cagayous will advise you when to pick a fight and when not to, and when you do he will counsel you on how to win. Violence is rife in Cagayous' world. Verbal violence mostly, but there is physical violence as well. Mostly, it is minor violence of the street-scrapping variety. Cagayous talks tough and he swings often enough, but he seems to draw the line at using a knife or other weapon. To an outsider, much of the street swagger is reminiscent of nothing so much as cocks strutting in a barnyard, of staking out territory.⁶⁴ Clearly, when walking down the street is

⁶¹ Lespès, *Alger: Etude de géographie*, 413, 442, 573, 575, 758, 763–64, 778–79. In 1930, sixteen firms employed 1,800 workers, 1,000 of them women, 1,425 of them Spanish or Spanish naturalized French.

⁶² Lespès, *Alger: Etude de géographie*, 785. Robert Bresson's film *Pickpocket* was made in 1959.

⁶³ Mille, "Quand Panurge ressuscita," 152. On political patronage and corruption in Algeria, see Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, 180–205; and David Prochaska, "The Political Culture of Settler Colonialism in Algeria: Politics in Bône, 1870–1920," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, nos. 48–49 (1988): 293–311. For a Moroccan case of economic power and political brokerage, see John Waterbury, *North for the Trade: The Life and Times of a Berber Merchant* (Berkeley, Calif., 1972).

⁶⁴ Albert Camus captures this street-swaggering stance in the following passage written, moreover, in *pataouète*. "Alors Coco y s'avance et y lui dit: 'Arrête un peu, arrête.' L'autre y dit: 'Qu'est-ce qu'y a?' Alors Coco y lui dit: 'Je vas te donner des coups.—A moi tu vas donner des coups?' Alors y met la main derrière [à la poche-revolver] mais c'était scousa. Alors Coco y lui dit: 'Mets pas la main derrière, parce qu'après j'te choppe le 6–35 et t'y mangeras des coups quand même.'" Camus, *Noces* (Paris, 1950), 66. "Then Coco goes up and says to him: 'Wait a minute, wait.' The other one says: 'What is it?' Then Coco says to him: 'I'm going to slug you.'—'You're gonna slug me?' Then he reached in his hip pocket, but it was only a pretext. Then Coco said to him: 'Don't reach for it, because after I hit you with the 6–35 you're going to eat it anyway.'"

elaborated this complexly, it is singularly important to those who are doing the sauntering, the preening.⁶⁵

Negotiating the street can be an end in itself; the process is more important than the destination. However, there are destinations as well as diversions. Cagayous and his friends go frequently to the popular theaters. The curtain opens and a woman with flour splashed on her face and body comes out and sings an obscene song. The Casbah itself offers a number of diversions.⁶⁶ In addition to visiting prostitutes, Cagayous' band goes to the Casbah to play dominoes or cards in a Moorish café, to eat couscous in a cheap restaurant, or *beignets arabs*, a sort of fritter, and *zlabia*, gooey, deep fat-fried sweets sold in stalls or from street vendors.⁶⁷ In the Casbah, Cagayous and his band could easily have run into a person like the Muslim in Figure 10.

Cagayous' street life is interrupted temporarily by marriage. One day, he chases away an Algerian who is attacking Mme. Solano and her daughter Thérésine. From this scarcely auspicious meeting, he drifts into marriage with Thérésine, letting the women arrange it and putting up only passive resistance. The street may belong to Cagayous and his friends, but the home, family, children, and marriage matters lie within the domain of women. The day of Cagayous' marriage is the one occasion in his life when he dresses up and acts like the rich. It takes exactly one month for his wife, who earlier resembled the Holy Virgin in Cagayous' eyes, to become "meaner than a [Berber] Kabyle dog." The problem, it seems, is the proverbial mother-in-law. Mme. Solano has moved in, and the three of them are locked in a power struggle for control of the household. The climax comes one afternoon when Cagayous returns early from work, starts arguing with them both, and his wife challenges him to hit her "if you are a man." It ends only when everyone troops down to the police station to lodge a formal complaint.⁶⁸

After his erstwhile mother-in-law hires a lawyer and files for a divorce, Cagayous sees a lawyer, too, who is a Frenchman from France, as were the vast majority of those who practiced the liberal professions. The lawyer, M. Lelaitier (literally, the milkman), initiates Cagayous into the mysteries of the law.

"The one who loses pays."

"And the one who wins?"

"The one who wins also pays. What do you think!"

"And why do they say justice is free?"

"Justice itself is free; but those who work don't do it on the house."⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Michel de Certeau elaborates a rhetoric of walking in which he compares turns of phrase or stylistic figures to the art of composing a path. See his chapter "Walking in the City," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven F. Randall, trans. (Berkeley, Calif., 1984), esp. 99–100.

⁶⁶ "A la casbah," in Auguste Robinet, *Cagayous antijuif* (Algiers, 1898), 157–61.

⁶⁷ "Virility and relationships with prostitutes play such a role that with certain authors the Casbah becomes a gigantic whorehouse." Gourdon, *et al.*, "Roman colonial," 153. They are referring to Louis Bertrand, Lucienne Favre, R.-H. de Vandelbourg, and Robert Randau, but their comments apply equally to Robinet.

⁶⁸ Robinet, *Le mariage de Cagayous*, 147.

⁶⁹ Auguste Robinet, *Le divorce de Cagayous* (Algiers, 1906), 42. "—Çuila qui perd y paye. —Et çuila qui gagne? —Çuila qui gagne aussi y paye. Alorss quoi! —Et pourquoi qu'on dit que la Justice ça doit être battel pour tout le monde? —La Justice elle est battel; mais ceuss-là qu'on travaille vec elle y marchent pas à l'oeil."

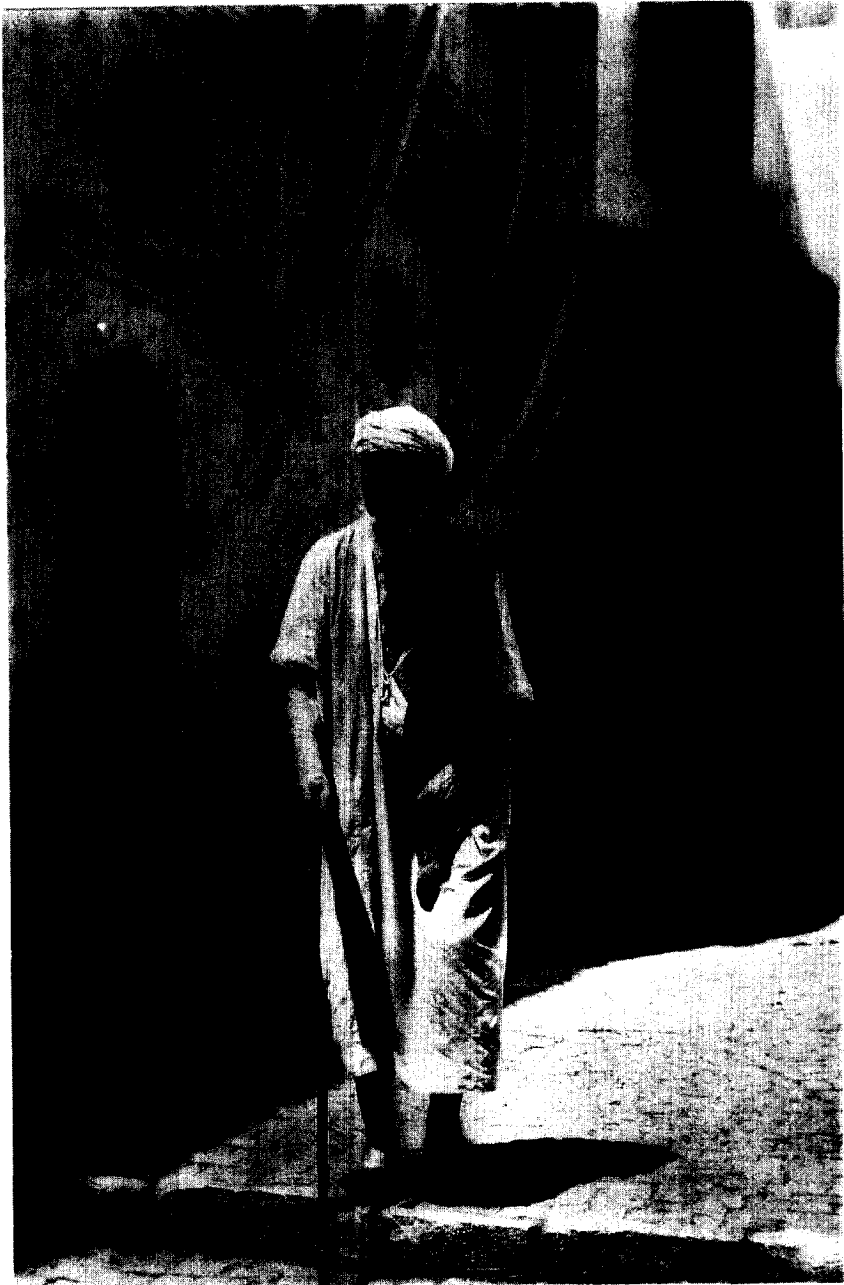


FIGURE 10: "53 Alger.—Casbah, rue de la Mer Rouge" (Vollenweider, Algiers). The main Muslim quarter, the Casbah was a source of diversion for Cagayous and his friends. Despite the caption on the back, this is more of a "scenes and types" than a view card. No doubt the shabbily dressed Muslim has been paid to pose for a "picturesque" scene in which his "old" clothing is linked to the "old" building façade on the left. Vollenweider produced photographs as well as postcards. I have a similar card in my collection, captioned "26. Alger.—Casbah, rue de la Mer Rouge," and it appears that both were taken on the same day on the same street and marketed as "typical" scenes of Muslim Algiers.

At this point, Cagayous decides to take justice into his own hands. An anonymous letter has informed him that his estranged wife has taken a lover. Cagayous and a friend decide to stake out the Solano house. Cagayous "knows a native," an Algerian who lends him a burnoose to wear as a disguise, and in the middle of the night they surprise not his wife but his mother-in-law and *her* lover. Thanks to the highly developed social networks in this community, news of the scandal soon spreads.⁷⁰ As a result, the divorce is granted and Cagayous returns to the street.

Note that we meet Cagayous' wife and his sister Chicanelle, but the only woman whom Cagayous is forced to take seriously is Mme. Solano. And even she constitutes only a temporary barrier to be overcome before Cagayous can return to the street. Women, relatively absent in the Cagayous adventures, occupy separate and unequal spheres from men: the interior, domestic world of home, family, and marriage versus the outside world of work and power.

WHAT ABOUT CAGAYOUS' POLITICS? During the anti-Semitic agitation and riots that peaked between 1898 and 1901 in Algeria at the same time as the Dreyfus Affair in France, Cagayous manifests his rabid anti-Semitism. Here is Cagayous:

All the time, the Jews dabble in the affairs of the government. The French, who are very similar to ants, are content to work, and at every moment the Jews are pulling something which leads to misery, war or disputes . . . The Jews are the same as bugs. If you say nothing, if you don't use strong insecticide, they pump you for all that you have in your pocket, in your stomach, in your head, and in the skin of . . . that which we have in our pants . . .

Down, down with the Jews!

That's my opinion, mine!⁷¹

And here is Fernand Grégoire, one of the leading anti-Semites of the day:

Unhealthy parasite, the Jew has introduced decay into our social milieu. Worshiper of the golden calf, he exercises economic power over us, he has infected us with his cult of money . . . It is above all in Algeria that the Jewish "malaria" [lit., bad air] blows.⁷²

Certainly, Cagayous' virulent anti-Semitism employs similar images of insects, parasites, disease, decomposition, and degeneracy; it utilizes comparable rhetorical

⁷⁰ Robinet, *Le divorce de Cagayous*, 64: "With Anaïs who tells Fifine, Chicanelle who tells Lina and Mecieu Hoc who tells everyone he can lay his hands on, there are enough that all of the Cantère, Algiers, Mustapha, Boufarik, Blida, everyone knows that Félisque has become the lover of Mme. Solano. *Aïe*, what a laugh!" Cantère and Mustapha are outlying suburbs of Algiers; Boufarik and Blida are nearby towns.

⁷¹ Robinet, *Cagayous antijuif*, 24, 28–29. "Tout le temps les juifs y barbotent dedans les affaires du Gouvernement. Les Français qui sont beaucoup pareils les fourmis, y restent tranquilles à travailler, et les juifs chaque instant y sortent un truc pour qui vient la misère, ou la guerre, ou les disputes . . . Les juifs c'est la même chose les punaises. Si vous disez rien, si vous y jetez pas de la poudre secticile forte, y vous pompent tout ça que vous avez dedans la poche, dedans la poitrine, dedans la tête et dedans la peau de . . . ça que nous avons dedans le patalon . . . En bas, en bas les juifs! Ça c'est mon opinion, à moi!" The terms *antijuif/antijudaïsme* and anti-Semite/anti-Semitism are used interchangeably in the Algerian case. The former is technically more accurate, since the Algerians are also Semitic peoples in a cultural sense, but "anti-Semitism" has the advantage of explicitly linking anti-Semitism in Algeria to that in France and elsewhere.

⁷² "Parasite morbifère, le juif a porté la décomposition dans notre milieu social. Adorateur du veau d'or, il nous tient par l'or, il nous a, par contagion, conquis à son culte . . . C'est en Algérie surtout que souffle la *Mal'aria* juive." Fernand Grégoire, *La juiverie algérienne* (Algiers, 1888), 5–6.

strategies whereby the Jews are reduced to a lower-than-human order of life; and it results in a text every bit as vile and disgusting as those produced by the leading anti-Semitic ideologues.⁷³

Key to understanding Cagayous' anti-Semitism, and how anti-Semitism in Algeria differed from that in France during the Dreyfus Affair, is seeing how it intertwined with the formation of settler colonial society occurring at this time. Initially an electoral phenomenon, Algerian anti-Semitism can be dated from the 1870 Crémieux decree, which enfranchised en masse the Jews of Algeria.⁷⁴ The Crémieux decree became a lightning rod that focused European resentment of the Jews. More like the native Algerians in language, dress, and culture, the Jews angered the Europeans by their ability to swing close elections between Opportunist and Radical Republicans, especially since they tended to vote in a bloc. In 1907, Jews comprised 8 percent of the Algiers population, and in 1926 10 percent.⁷⁵

The Jewish question thus became entangled with electoral politics. Most of the time, most of colonial Algeria constituted an Opportunist Republican stronghold, typified by Parti Colonial leader Eugène Etienne, deputy from the *département* of Oran, and the colorless Gaston Thomson, deputy from the *département* of Constantine and the longest sitting member of parliament during the Third Republic. The Opportunists drew major support from the native French, the minority Radical Republicans from the Spanish, Italians, and Maltese naturalized French. The Radicals were not above using anti-Semitism as a stick with which to beat the Opportunists, linking the political Left with anti-Semitism in the process. The Spanish, Maltese, and Italian *petits blancs* proved particularly susceptible to anti-Semitic calls laced with anti-capitalist rhetoric that portrayed the Jews as unscrupulous moneylenders and the like.

Then in 1889, a naturalization law was passed that automatically made the children of European settlers like Cagayous and his kind into French citizens. Why was such a law enacted? Algerians outnumbered Europeans and were increasing at a higher rate, and non-French Europeans outnumbered native French and were increasing at a higher rate. To shore up their hegemony over colonial Algeria in the face of insufficient French immigration, therefore, the French decided to enlarge their ranks with other Europeans. But what made good demographic sense fueled an already divisive politics of resentment.

Although anti-Semitic outbursts occurred in the 1870s and 1880s, anti-Semitism at the turn of the century went well beyond earlier outbreaks. Though by no means

⁷³ For contemporary works on anti-Semitism in colonial Algeria, mostly by anti-Semites, see in particular Joseph-François Aumerat, *L'anti-sémitisme à Alger* (Algiers, 1885); Louis Durieu, *Le prolétariat juif en Algérie* (Paris, 1899); Durieu, *Les juifs algériens (1870–1901)* (Paris, 1902); Georges Meynié, *L'Algérie juive* (Paris, 1887); Eugène Bey, *La vérité sur les émeutes d'Alger de janvier 1898* (Algiers, 1898); Fernand Grégoire, *La juiverie algérienne*; anon., *L'oeuvre des antijuifs d'Alger* (Algiers, 1899); Jacques Defrance, *L'expulsion des juifs* (Algiers, 1898); and Defrance, *Drumont: Sa vie, son oeuvre, son programme* (Algiers, 1898).

⁷⁴ Adolphe Crémieux was minister of justice in Léon Gambetta's Government of National Defense and as such had purview over Algeria. The decree conferring French citizenship on all Jews in Algeria was promulgated by Crémieux on October 24, 1870, at the very beginning of the Third Republic.

⁷⁵ Gouvernement Général de l'Algérie, *Tableau général des communes d'Algérie*, 2–3; Lespès, *Alger: Etude de géographie*, 494. See also Claude Martin, *Les israélites algériens de 1830 à 1902* (Paris, 1936), 288–90.

limited to Algiers, anti-Semitism went furthest there.⁷⁶ Max Régis, son of an Italian father who had been naturalized French, emerged as the darling of the anti-Semitic movement. Elected mayor of Algiers at the age of twenty-six, Régis incited five days of rioting in January 1898 with inflammatory language in reaction to the publication of Emile Zola's *J'accuse*. Jewish shops and residences were attacked, two people were killed, 100 injured, and 700 arrested.⁷⁷

In *Cagayous antijuif*, Robinet wrote a scene, "Drumont Arrives," in which the fictional Cagayous and his buddies go to the port to greet the real-life French anti-Semitic leader, Edouard Drumont, upon his arrival in Algiers on April 3, 1898. "The boulevard was full of people, and down below on the quay, the carriages were crammed with Max Régis . . . and other anti-Jewish leaders that I didn't know." Drumont gives a speech, at the conclusion of which he is given "wreaths, bouquets, palm branches."⁷⁸

Well, when I saw that, I grabbed the palm branch that Bacora was carrying, and I walked up to Drumont. Watch out, everyone! Make way!

—Which one is Drumont? I asked.

—I am, a gentleman answered, laughing. He had a full head of hair, a beard, and was wearing glasses.

—Good. Me, I'm Cagayous!⁷⁹

In the May 1898 French parliamentary elections, four of the six deputies elected from Algeria were avowed anti-Semites, including Drumont, who was chosen to represent the *département* of Algiers in Paris.⁸⁰

Sociologist of the street, Cagayous observes that the *petits blancs*, whether naturalized French or not, are more anti-Semitic than the native French and the women more strongly anti-Semitic than the men. "Listen, I'll lend you [Bacora] some money and with it you can buy a photograph of Max Régis. Take that to your girlfriend. Tonight she'll let you mount her."⁸¹

Such unflattering, sexist scenes, as well as the 1898 Algiers riots, suggest that there was more to anti-Semitism than electoral politics. Anti-Semitism fueled the

⁷⁶ On Oran, see Geneviève Dermenjian, *La crise anti-juive oranaise (1895–1905): L'antisémitisme dans l'Algérie coloniale* (Paris, 1986); and on Bône, see Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, 201–05. See also Martin, *Les israélites algériens*, 299.

⁷⁷ Martin, *Les israélites algériens*, 295–300; Charles-Robert Ageron, *Les algériens musulmans et la France*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1968), 595–96; and C. Iancu, "Du nouveau sur les troubles antijuifs en Algérie à la fin du XIX^{ème} siècle," in Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, *Relations entre juifs et musulmans en Afrique du Nord XIX^e–XX^e siècles* (Paris, 1980), 179–82. See also Dermenjian, *La crise anti-juive oranaise*, 74–89.

⁷⁸ Robinet, *Cagayous antijuif*, 89–90. Algiers greeted Drumont "with unbelievable outbursts of enthusiasm." Martin, *Les israélites algériens*, 305; see also 303–06. On *Cagayous antijuif*, see Paul Siblot, "Cagayous antijuif: Un discours colonial en proie à la racisation," *Mots*, 15 (1987): 59–75.

⁷⁹ Robinet, *Cagayous antijuif*, 90. "Alors quand je vois ça, j'empoigne la branche du palmier qui se portait Bacora, et je marche en devant Drumont. Gardez de là vous autres! Place! —Qui c'est Drumont? je parle. —C'est moi qui me répond en riant un meçieu qu'il a les grands cheveux, la barbe et les lunettes. —Ça va bien. Moi je suis Cagayous!"

⁸⁰ Drumont received 11,557 votes, versus 4,069 for his two opponents. Martin, *Les israélites algériens*, 306.

⁸¹ Robinet, *Cagayous antijuif*, 78. "Attends, moi je te [Bacora] prête deux ronds et ça fait que tu peux t'acheter la photographie de Max Régis. Porte-z-y à te gonze. Ce soir elle laisse que te montes." Charles-Robert Ageron describes Régis sitting in his carriage drawn by an enthusiastic crowd, "the women of the Algiers *petit peuple* throwing flowers, offering palms to their idol." Ageron, *Les algériens musulmans*, 583. See also Martin, *Les israélites algériens*, 297, 299, 304.

larger movement for autonomy if not outright separation from France, which in turn constituted a crucial stage in the formation of settler colonial society. Beyond simply an electoral phenomenon in *fin-de-siècle* Algeria, racial anti-Semitism functioned as a lightning rod that collected a range of resentments. First, it displaced European fears of the Algerians onto the Jews: "This is what it would be like if the Arabs could vote."⁸² Second, the better-off native French settlers, aware that the metropole viewed them as inferior, feared being overwhelmed both by the Algerians and the Spanish, Italian, and Maltese poor whites, whom they considered a "foreign peril." Third, Cagayous and the other *petits blancs* themselves came down with a classic case of status anxiety. Ethnically, they were colonizers; economically, however, they were frequently little better off than the colonized Algerians, let alone the Jews. And was not Cagayous' sexism fueled by the threat to his masculinity posed by strong women such as his shopkeeper mother-in-law, Mme. Solano? Added to this was class resentment directed toward the native French who ran the colony and pulled the political strings. Robinet has Cagayous say a good deal about the accumulated resentments lower-class *pièds noirs* had felt and were now expressing for the first time toward their economic and social superiors. At heart, Cagayous remains unconvinced of the necessity to hire a French lawyer; he obtains his divorce his own way. "In the colonial Algerian psyche we witness a transference of racial hostility from the Muslim to the Jew," one scholar writes. "Shared by the ensemble of Europeans, it seems it was strongest among the *petits blancs*."⁸³ And stronger among female than male *petits blancs*, if we are to believe Cagayous.

The Algerians posed relatively little threat at this time seventy years after the French invasion and some two decades before the rise of Algerian nationalism, and the European settlers were able thereby to redirect their racism from the Algerians to the Jews; nothing demonstrates more clearly the growing self-confidence, not to mention self-importance, of this settler colonial society-in-formation. The denouement of the anti-Semitic crisis in Algeria turned on developments in France. At the height of the Dreyfus Affair, a besieged Third Republic needed all the support it could get and eventually caved in to the settlers' more moderate demands in exchange for their support against the anti-Dreyfusards. These concessions satisfied all but the most uncompromising anti-Semites; tensions lessened from the end of 1898, and by the parliamentary elections of 1902 Algeria returned to the Opportunist fold.

In the Cagayous saga, what is striking is the fact that Robinet follows *Cagayous antijuif*—which commentators generally regard as factual and cite extensively—with *Cagayous antitout*—which is more clearly a fictional invention and generally goes unmentioned. From anti-Semitism, Cagayous moves to his own idiosyncratic form of *antitoutisme*, anti-everythingness. The shift from anti-Semitism to autonomy and separatism is transmuted by Robinet into a fantasy: What if the *petits blancs* came to power in Algeria?

Fed up with politicians who have failed to deliver, Cagayous puts his political

⁸² "In effect the Jew with French citizenship is an Algerian [*indigène*] who has been given the right to vote." Gourdon, *et al.*, "Roman colonial," 151.

⁸³ Iancu, "Du nouveau sur les troubles antijuifs," 175.

beliefs, or rather lack of beliefs, into practice and runs for a seat in the Paris National Assembly to represent Bablouette. The quintessential populist candidate, Cagayous holds a wide-open electoral meeting. He is questioned by a sweeper and his family who have no bathroom; whenever the family eats bean soup, they have to use a field in the middle of the night, where they have to compete with the Maltese goats and Kabyle dogs. Cagayous asks how many latrines are needed. One with two places, no more. Cagayous promises to interpellate the government about *les chiottes de le peuple*, the shithouses of the people.

Due to massive electoral fraud, however, Cagayous loses. Undaunted, he runs for city council in Algiers. He drafts a campaign platform that reads like a declaration of the rights of the people of Bablouette.

Citizens anti-everything, . . .

Me, who is anti-everything, if you ever give me the job, I'll change everything here . . .

What I want, me, is that the country may be rich and that the people may be happy and me deputy.⁸⁴

He organizes an electoral slate, the most distinguished member of which is a retired postman. He composes a *Marseillaise antitoute*. He even starts a newspaper that is in actuality an electoral broadsheet, as were so many papers in colonial Algeria. All to no avail, for he inexplicably loses again. *Cagayous antitout* constitutes Robinet's literary reworking of the settlers' calls for autonomy, and when Cagayous loses his campaign for office Cagayous returns from public life to the streets, just as Algeria lapsed into political quiescence after the concessions conferred by France in 1902.

THESE ARE THE ADVENTURES, especially *Cagayous antijuif*, that made Cagayous so popular. How exactly do we account for his popularity? In creating Cagayous, Robinet clearly touched a chord that reverberates to this day among the *pieds noirs*. Cagayous no doubt appealed directly to those from his same *petit blanc* milieu—assuming they could read. In addition, Cagayous spoke to the European settlers more generally, his humor smoothing over class differences and resentments rather than stirring them up. To be sure, Cagayous was considered “lowbrow,” or “popular”; reading him smacked of literary slumming—you had better not admit you enjoyed it. Thus it was news in 1920 when a “big” professor at the University of Algiers wrote an essay in which he took the Cagayous tales seriously.⁸⁵

Given their evident popularity, what do we make of the Cagayous tales as literature? How do they work as writing? In the Cagayous newspaper serials, Robinet held up a mirror to the *petits blancs* and the *pieds noirs* more generally. One chief strategy he employed was a documentary, “you are there” approach in which

⁸⁴ Robinet, *Cagayous candidat*, quoted in Robinet, *Cagayous*, 125–26. “Citoyens antitout, . . . Moi que je suis antitout, si jamais vous me donnez la place, je sange tout ça qu’y a ici . . . Ça que je veux moi, c’est que le pays y soye riche et que le monde y soye content et moi député.”

⁸⁵ Gautier, “Les émeutes antijuives.” See n. 40 above. There are numerous fascinating parallels—writing, newspapers, music, philology, politics—between Robinet and Aristide Bruant, one of the most colorful characters of *fin-de-siècle* Paris. See Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830–1930* (New York, 1986), 235–40, and the references cited there.

he blurred fact and fiction. In *Cagayous antijuif*, Cagayous met Edouard Drumont and talked to him. Many observers at the time and since have considered Cagayous a documentary, factual, objective source. To some, *Cagayous antijuif* constitutes an "incomparable philological and historical document . . . 1895–1905, the period of the anti-Semitic troubles, is fixed in it for all time."⁸⁶ Another notes the "admirable fidelity" found in Cagayous of "a French dialect in formation . . . [T]he patois of Bab-el-Oued is born under our eyes."⁸⁷

However, such observers have bought into Robinet's conflation of fact and fiction. A slippage occurs, and fiction becomes fact. The writer who introduces *Les amours de Cagayous* tells us that "Cagayous was born at the age of ten . . . [H]e made the acquaintance of a *littérateur* named Musette, a sort of long-haired, intelligent, artistic, spiritual bohemian . . . who was to become his good genie and godfather."⁸⁸ This was followed a number of years later in a survey of North African literature by the comment, "Cagayous is the representation of a type that exists, that we have seen act and heard speak."⁸⁹ A year after Robinet's death and more than a decade after the last Cagayous serial, another critic wrote that Cagayous "lives, he has even survived his author and he is assured of living for a long time to come."⁹⁰

Robinet's strategy of writing fiction that looked like fact, combined with its publication originally as newspaper serials, suggests that one genre the Cagayous adventures resemble is serial novels (*romans feuilletons*). *Feuilletons* appeared in newspaper installments primarily in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like Robinet's stories, they were replete with cartoonish characterizations and had paper-thin plots. Written to meet the structural exigencies of journalism rather than the demands of literature, such mass-market fictions privileged action over description, and abbreviated description at that; numerous cues, thumbnail sketches, and plot summaries were used to ensnare new readers; and the episodes continued as long as the paper sold. Yet newspaper serials were rarely written in the first person, as was Cagayous, and even more rarely in dialect, because to do so limited readership by definition.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Audisio, introduction, Robinet, *Cagayous*, 14. Compare Calmes, *Le roman colonial*, 68–77; and Gautier, "Les émeutes antijuives."

⁸⁷ Gautier, "Les émeutes antijuives," 204.

⁸⁸ Auguste Robinet, *Les amours de Cagayous: Pochades algériennes* (Algiers, 1896), introduction, 11–12, written by "Fly" (pseud.), a member of the group around Robinet at *Le Turco*.

⁸⁹ Arthur Pellegrin, *La littérature nord-africaine* (Tunis, 1920), 76.

⁹⁰ Audisio, in Robinet, *Cagayous*, 249; compare 14. I, of course, understand that Cagayous is fiction, not fact, that despite Robinet's writing strategy of conflating fact and fiction to achieve a documentary, lifelike effect, Cagayous was the creation of his author. The following description of a caricature of Robinet makes this clear: "The 'Automobile Club of Algiers,' of which Robinet was a founding member, conserves in its gallery a magisterial caricature by Herzig which represents our author dressed as a shepherd, . . . wearing a pointed hat with a wide brim, manipulating to the sound of his *musette* a minuscule Cagayous, castanets in hand." Lamouche, "Un publiciste: Musette," 546.

⁹¹ The topic of subliterary genres, or what the French call *paralittérature*, is too vast to enter into here, but it ranges from serial novels to comic strips and other formula fiction, all of which are intimately connected to the rise of a capitalist mass reading public in the last two centuries. See in general Jean Tortel, et al., *Entretiens sur la paralittérature* (Paris, 1970); and the special issue of *Europe*, 52, no. 542 (1974). On formula fiction, see John Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago, 1976); and on comic strips, Francis Lacassin, *Pour un neuvième art: La bande dessinée* (Paris, 1971). Compare Slim [pseud. of Menouard Merabtene], *Zid Ya Bouzid: Les meilleures bandes dessinées de Slim* (Algiers, 1980). See also, on proletarian literature, Michel Radon,

More suggestive still is the number of critics who describe Cagayous as a picaro and situate his adventures in the picaresque genre, although there are problems here, too, as we shall see.⁹² Already in 1896 with the publication of *Cagayous: Pochades algériennes*, the connection was made in the pages of *Le Turco* between Cagayous and Gavroche, Victor Hugo's famous Parisian gamin in *Les misérables* (1862).⁹³ That Robinet drew on conventions of the picaresque is clear. Usually written in the first person, a picaresque novel recounts the adventures of a lower-class rogue who copes with the world through his wile and guile but largely fails to learn from it, in a form that embodies the satirical perspective of a lower-class person looking up and often unmasking the foibles of his putative social betters.⁹⁴ Little if any character development occurs in a picaresque novel; it is not a *Bildungsroman*. A picaroon learns but does not change or mature; he wakes up every morning as though it were the first day of his life.⁹⁵ Cagayous learns about the legal profession, he gets married and divorced, but he returns to the street fundamentally unchanged. Cagayous' position in the life cycle does not alter; he does not age. He is not born, he does not die; he is a perpetual single adult. He hovers as if in a timeless limbo somewhere after adolescence but before middle age. He has no firm social ties—no wife, no family responsibilities—instead, he is on the road, on the street. Lack of character development also accounts for the episodic construction of the picaresque novel: one tale follows another. Succession replaces development. Hence the picaresque author faces the technical problem of closure: there is no reason intrinsic to the narrative why it should stop.

Cagayous is a rogue in sixteenth-century parlance, a street-fighting man in twentieth. He swaggers down the street like a street tough, but Cagayous and his kind are not hard-core criminals. It is by his wits that Cagayous and his picaroon literary kin live. Cagayous' attitude toward his social position consists of one part fatalistic acceptance and one part celebration of personal freedom. Picaros are economically dependent. Cagayous does not mind collecting garbage; no social opprobrium attaches to his lowly occupational status as far as he is concerned. Picaros typically turn occupational servitude to their advantage. With nothing to lose economically and no social pretensions to maintain, the picaro sees right through bourgeois claims of respectability to the hypocrisy they are. Cagayous views his upper-class, native French lawyer skeptically. Thus the picaroon hero claims to tell the truth; the picaresque novel creates situations in which the picaro induces his putative social betters to unmask themselves, revealing the foibles and pretensions

Histoire de la littérature prolétarienne de langue française: Littérature ouvrière, littérature paysanne, littérature d'expression populaire (1974; rpt. edn., Paris, 1986), esp. 10–25. I thank Mary Harper for helpful discussions.

⁹² Audisio, introduction, Robinet, *Cagayous*, 13; Calmes, *Le roman colonial*, 68–77.

⁹³ "Cagayous appears today, . . . who, with Assus, has made the success of our newspaper . . . Cagayous is popular from Nemours to Tunis and from Algiers to Ouargla . . . The fantasy of Musette will live from now on in Algeria in the same degree as V. Hugo's Gavroche. He is our very own Gavroche, funnier perhaps than his Parisian cousin, more beloved as well." *Le Turco* (January 30, 1896).

⁹⁴ On the picaresque, see, among other works, Barbara A. Babcock, "'Liberty's a Whore': Inversions, Marginalia, and Picaresque Narrative," in Babcock, ed., *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1978), 95–116; and Robert Alter, *Rogue's Progress: Studies in the Picaresque Novel* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964).

⁹⁵ Alter, *Rogue's Progress*, 32–33.

of society in the process. Mme. Solano attempts to take Cagayous for all he is worth, but Cagayous reveals her extramarital hanky-panky.

Humor constitutes one of the chief pleasures of these texts; it arises in the gap that separates lower from upper class, *petit blanc* from better-off native French, *pièdes noirs* from rich Parisians. Cagayous' *modus vivendi* is humor, the joke, often the dirty one at that. His scatological humor rakes up social dirt, pollutes the colonial order, vents class tensions. The joker "lightens for everyone the oppressiveness of social reality, demonstrates its arbitrariness by making light of formality in general."⁹⁶ A symbolic play on social form, a joke offers an alternative; it undercuts the validity of the existing order. In Cagayous, the dirty joke, the dirty mouth, and the dirty work all come together.

Cagayous the picaro shares much in common with the trickster.⁹⁷ Both are social outsiders, both rely on humor, both are liminal figures. Like the trickster, Cagayous lives at the bottom of the social heap. He leads a relatively unsettled work life and prefers to "hang out" on the street. He involves himself in a succession of scatological episodes, which allow him to express his overactive libido. He is more often apolitical than political—*Cagayous antitout* follows *Cagayous antijuif*—and asocial, defiant of authority and social norms. Despite his sexual swaggering, he engages in no lasting female relationship, with no procreative outcome. Cagayous the trickster levels the colonial social hierarchy, reverses social statuses, breaks the rules of the social game. As a literary creation, however, Cagayous did not threaten the colonial hierarchy in actuality; he disturbs the social order, inverts it, but only symbolically.

Those critics who argue that Cagayous exemplifies the picaresque cite his family resemblances to other literary characters, ranging from Panurge, Karagöz, Guignol, Till Eulenspiegel, John Bull, and Gavroche to Jacques Bonhomme, Gianduja, Stenterello, Marius, Olive, and Charlot.⁹⁸ Although a far, far cry from Rabelais in literary quality, Cagayous has a Rabelaisian tone that recalls Panurge. Certainly, there are echoes and more of Mikhail Bakhtin's description of the carnivalesque in Rabelais also to be found in Cagayous, not least Bakhtin's emphasis on orality.⁹⁹ Similarities also exist between Cagayous and Till Eulenspiegel.¹⁰⁰ However, it is

⁹⁶ Mary Douglas, "The Social Control of Cognition: Some Factors in Joke Perception," *Man*, n.s., 3 (1968): 372.

⁹⁷ On the trickster, see, among other works, Barbara Babcock-Abrahams, "'A Tolerated Margin of Mess': The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered," *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 11 (1975): 147–86; and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Davy Crockett as Trickster: Pornography, Liminality, and Symbolic Inversion in Victorian America," in her *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York, 1985).

⁹⁸ Audisio, introduction, Robinet, *Cagayous*, 7–8; Mille, "Quand Panurge ressuscite," 152. To this list, I would add Pepe le Moko, played by Jean Gabin in the film of the same name (director, Julien Duvivier, 1937), remade as *Algiers*, starring Charles Boyer and Hedy Lamarr (director, John Cromwell, 1938).

⁹⁹ In addition to Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532, 1534), see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Helene Iswolsky, trans. (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), esp. 11–30.

¹⁰⁰ Like Cagayous, Till Eulenspiegel delights in language, and he uses it to make a fool of his boss, typically by following his orders literally. Ordered to boil some hops, he boils a dog named "Hops." In a bathhouse advertised as a "House of Cleansing," he enjoys an enormous bowel movement. Again like Cagayous, he has no mature relationship with a woman, in or out of marriage, but "he delights in shit." Paul Oppenheimer, trans., *A Pleasant Vintage of Till Eulenspiegel* (Middletown, Conn., 1972), xx.

Victor Hugo's famous picaro, Gavroche, to whom Cagayous is most often compared by some colonial commentators.¹⁰¹

Cagayous' literary relatives abound on the other side of the Mediterranean as well. Ottoman puppet theater takes its name from the chief marionette, Karagöz, which is Turkish for "black eye."¹⁰² In the nineteenth century, Théophile Gauthier, Gérard Nerval, and Pierre Loti, among other French writers and travelers, all viewed performances in which Karagöz satirized current conditions from the perspective of the common people in a manner that combined humor and obscenity.¹⁰³ In Egypt, the medieval genre of *maqama*, sketches in which a trickster character repeatedly wins out over his adversaries, was revived and reworked by journalist Muhammad al-Muwaylihi in serialized episodes published in his father's periodical in 1898–1899.¹⁰⁴ Then there is that mythical trickster, the righter of moral wrongs known as Juha in most of the Arab world, J'ha in Morocco, and Djoha in Algeria, who turns the tables on the haughty and the high-born on behalf of the Muslim salt of the earth.¹⁰⁵ The contemporary Algerian comic-strip cult figure, Bouzid, has also been compared to Djoha. His creator, Slim, the pseudonym of Menouard Merabtene, drew a cartoon shortly after Algerian independence in 1962 when the Front de Libération National (FLN) was establishing single-party rule. One character says, "A single party is not fun." Another responds, "Yes, thank God we have only one."¹⁰⁶

RANSACKING LITERARY GENRES and searching for literary likenesses, however suggestive, risks moving so far away from late nineteenth and early twentieth-century colonial Algiers that we lose sight of Cagayous, the object of our study. Rather than gauging Cagayous in terms of the documentary and picaresque generally, I now want to ask how literary critics have assessed Cagayous within

¹⁰¹ Audisio, introduction, Robinet, *Cagayous*, 7–8.

¹⁰² Also known as Karakouz, Karagouz, and Garagouz. On Karagöz, see Jean Déjeux, *Djoh'a: Héros de la tradition orale arabo-berbère; Hier et aujourd'hui* (Sherbrooke, Quebec, 1978), 91–112; and Sabri Esat Siavusgil, "Karagöz: Théâtre d'ombres turcs," *Les cahiers de l'Oronte*, no. 2 (1965): 15–32.

¹⁰³ Where Cagayous merely mouths obscenities, Karagöz wields his giant phallus in a number of ways including as a weapon. In an 1835 performance in Algiers, Karagöz uses his member to drive off a French army contingent; in Tunis at the beginning of the twentieth century, he sodomized, successively, a Jew, a British tourist, and a French consul. No wonder Nerval compared the Karagöz skits to Rabelais' ribald tales.

¹⁰⁴ On Muhammad al Muwaylihi and the *maqama*, see Marilyn Booth, *Bayram al Tunisi's Egypt: Social Criticism and Narrative Strategies* (Exeter, 1990), chap. 4, esp. 345–47, 350–53, and the references cited there.

¹⁰⁵ On Djoha, see Auguste Mouliéras, *Les fables de Si Djeh'a* (Paris, 1892); and Déjeux, *Djoh'a*. Central to the enduring quality of these literary types is the way they are worked and reworked. Richard Strauss's orchestral poem, *Till Eulenspiegel* (Opus 28), was performed first in 1895. The Algerian writers Mohammed Dib (*Au café*, 1955), Kateb Yacine (*La poudre d'intelligence*, 1959), and Rachid Boudjedra (*L'insolation*, 1972) all rework the Djoha theme.

¹⁰⁶ Slim, *Zid Ya Bouzid*; Déjeux, *Djoh'a*, 34; and Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Algerian-in-Exile's Pen Wielded for Home Front," *New York Times* (March 19, 1995): 8. Critical of both the FLN generals—"a collection of banana republic brass"—and fundamentalists of the Front Islamique de Salut (FIS)—"I am part of the silent Algerian majority which is against religious fascism and for a free modern Algeria"—Merabtene left Algeria for Morocco as a result of death threats in September 1992 and has lived in Paris since the end of 1994 (Ibrahim, "Algerian-in-Exile"). Thanks to Edmund Burke III for first bringing Slim to my attention.

colonial Algerian literature.¹⁰⁷ The context of the Cagayous tales is the colonial Algerian novel, written primarily by Europeans of Algeria in French. Within the colonial novel, Cagayous is viewed as what I would term a “primitive,” both in the sense that he came a little early chronologically and that he is *fruste*, rough around the edges, especially given his predilection for *pataouète*—his low class origins again scraping against the more highbrow pretensions of the *roman colonial*.

This becomes clearer if we place Cagayous more precisely within the development of the colonial novel. Here I follow one of the leading critics of colonial Algerian literature, Jean Déjeux, who distinguishes three periods or stages of the *roman colonial*.¹⁰⁸ During the first period, from 1830 to 1900, mostly French travelers and writers—Gustave Flaubert, Alphonse Daudet, Guy de Maupassant, André Gide, Eugène Fromentin—saw in Algeria a “new Orient” and produced what can be termed a *littérature d'escale*, a “port-of-call” literature. In a second stage, 1900 to 1935, which corresponds to the heyday of settler colonialism, *pied noir* writers led by Louis Bertrand and Robert Randau claimed to witness the origins of a “new race,” called themselves “Algerianists,” and championed “Algerianism” as their literary approach, by which colonial Algeria would achieve artistic autonomy from metropolitan French cultural hegemony. As Randau put it, “There must be a North African literature because a people which has its own life must also have its own language and literature.”¹⁰⁹ In the third period, from 1935 to the outbreak of the revolution in 1954, Camus put his stamp on the trend that became known as “Mediterraneanism,” a celebration of the Mediterranean sea and sun. To these three periods, a fourth needs to be added, from 1954 to the present, a period characterized not so much by the political rupture of Algerian independence as by the continuity for the former *pieds noirs* who have returned to France (*rapatriés*) of colonial nostalgia—“nostalgérie,” nostalgia for Algeria—and apologias for French Algeria.¹¹⁰

Increasingly, scholarly opinion regards the Algerian *roman colonial* as “minor” literature.¹¹¹ In this perspective, Camus is the only world-class writer produced by colonial Algeria; the others are not only of second rank but progressively forgotten. As for the “Algerianist” trend within the *roman colonial*, “aesthetically speaking,” it “offers hardly any interest.”¹¹² Since Algerian independence in 1962, there has been both extensive discussion and striking unanimity among postcolonial critics on why this is so. What has been termed the myth of the colonial novel corresponds to the myth of French Algeria, namely, that not only was assimilation between

¹⁰⁷ My starting point here is a 1977 study of the colonial novel: “Political and/or literary essays . . . 1894. First installments of *Cagayous*, by MUSETTE (the genre of which is difficult to define, but which had an important influence on all colonial literature in Algeria).” Gourdon, *et al.*, “Roman colonial,” 83. And thus I want to ask, in what sense is Cagayous political?

¹⁰⁸ Déjeux, *La littérature algérienne contemporaine*, 13–53.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Déjeux, *La littérature algérienne contemporaine*, 27.

¹¹⁰ Jean-Claude Vatin aptly describes the outpouring of apologias as “French pleas for the defense of ‘tearjerkers’” (*les plaidoyers ou ‘larmoyers’ français*). Vatin, *L’Algérie politique: Histoire et société* (Paris, 1974), 309, quoted in Philip Dine, *Images of the Algerian War: French Fiction and Film, 1954–1992* (New York, 1994), 153. See also Dine, 149–50; and Stora, *La gangrène et l’oubli*.

¹¹¹ This point is made by Martine Mathieu, in “Présentation,” Mathieu, *Le roman colonial*, 9. The *roman colonial* generally is characterized here as “minor” in a collection devoted not only to colonial Algeria but also Madagascar and Réunion.

¹¹² Déjeux, *La littérature algérienne contemporaine*, 33. See also Siblot, “Pères spirituels,” 29.

Europeans and Algerians possible but that it had occurred.¹¹³ The myth of integration was a myth because it excluded the Algerians and the Jews at the turn of the twentieth century. Yet the *pieds noirs* did constitute themselves as a settler colonial society, although not exactly a "new race."

Note how the general line of criticism of the colonial novel dovetails with Cagayous' historical context in which I have emphasized French settler colonialism. By unmasking the myths of the *roman colonial* and of integration to show that the colonial novel effectively excludes Algerians and Jews in varying degrees, these literary critics demonstrate the racism of the Algerian *roman colonial* in a settler colonial context.¹¹⁴

To return now to Cagayous, we may say that within the *roman colonial* Robinet clearly fits into the category of "Algerianism" between 1900 and 1930, but the important point is that he does not fit easily. First, he comes so early that he is a premature "Algerianist"; he is alternately considered a precursor and a "forgotten ancestor."¹¹⁵ Second, even within this "minor" literature, Robinet is viewed as minor. In the four primary studies that discuss the "Algerianist" stage of the colonial novel, for example, the first mentions but does not analyze Cagayous, the second devotes a single paragraph to the tales, the third cites Cagayous' adventures extensively but "accompanies the illustrations with a constant condemnation," and the fourth uses Robinet as a way of introducing the first chapter.¹¹⁶

Yet the Cagayous tales were and are undeniably popular not only among a reading public but among at least some colonial critics.¹¹⁷ The key point is, however, that it was commentators in colonial Algeria directly or indirectly influenced by "Algerianism" who characterized the Cagayous tales as picaresque. Once the link between Cagayous and the picaresque was initially made, it was continually repeated; as a "flattering reference," it lent an aesthetic sheen to the tales.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ "Contacts between the races . . . are described . . . as if . . . Algeria was France and [as if] the races were already mixed." Déjeux, *La littérature algérienne contemporaine*, 32. In contrast, French-language literature of the Maghreb constitutes for Albert Memmi "a literature of separation," which in effect leaves out the native Arabs and Berbers. See Memmi, "Une littérature de la separation," in Albert Memmi, ed., *Anthologie des écrivains français du Maghreb* (Paris, 1969), 11–21. In Memmi's view, therefore, "Camus's *The Stranger* is in the first place about Camus as a stranger in his native land" (p. 17). For Déjeux, "The myth of integration leads to exclusion . . . If the Latins [i.e., Europeans] are integrated, the 'others' are not: *integration and exclusion*." Jean Déjeux, "De l'éternel méditerranéen à l'éternel Jugurtha," *Revue algérienne des sciences juridiques, politiques et économiques*, 14 (1977): 674, emphasis in original.

¹¹⁴ See, among others, Déjeux, *La littérature algérienne contemporaine*, 21–22, 30, 51–52.

¹¹⁵ The term "forgotten ancestor" is Siblot's. "Pères spirituels," 48–54. Calmes treats Robinet as a precursor to the "grand roman colonial." *Le roman colonial*, 67–77.

¹¹⁶ Jean Déjeux, *Bibliographie de la littérature "algérienne" des Français* (Paris, 1978); Gourdon, et al., "Roman colonial"; Calmes, *Le roman colonial*; and Fadhlia Yahiaoui, *Roman et société coloniale dans l'Algérie de l'entre-deux-guerres* (Algiers, 1985). I am following here the line of argument developed in Siblot, "Pères spirituels," precisely because he first establishes the position of these four critical works within the literature on the *roman colonial* and "Algerianism," then proceeds to gauge the position of the Cagayous tales within them (see 55, n. 4). Déjeux characterizes Robinet as "local production that hardly makes it across the Mediterranean." *La littérature algérienne contemporaine*, 23.

¹¹⁷ For testimonials from Pierre Mille, Arthur Pellegrin, Jules Roy, and Pierre Martino, see Siblot, "Pères spirituels," 49. Jules Roy, for example, writes, "I am an African; these unsophisticated pages have brought back the times of my youth." Quoted in Yahiaoui, *Roman et société coloniale*, 18.

¹¹⁸ Paul Siblot, "Un essai d'élaboration identitaire en société coloniale: Cagayous," in Robert Lafont, ed., *La production d'identité* (Montpellier, 1986), 219.

In making such a move, colonial critics simultaneously aestheticized Cagayous—assimilated him into serious or “high” literature in keeping with general “Algerianist” goals—and dehistoricized him—occluded his specifically French Algerian context. To locate Cagayous’ kind among such exemplars of the picaresque as Rabelais and Hugo tends both to valorize Cagayous as art—art by association—and to downplay his documentary aspects that link him to colonial Algiers.

I want, therefore, to resist this critical turn to the picaresque and return instead to colonial Algiers, to argue that Robinet’s texts, far from passively reflecting their milieu, actively contributed to the formation of settler colonial society in Algeria. Cagayous documents the preoccupations of the European settlers, of the nascent *pied noir* community, but as striking as the presence of the Europeans is the absence of the Jews and Algerians. The Cagayous adventures record only one side of the colonial Algerian equation. For Cagayous, colonial Algerian society comprises a clear-cut ethnic and racial hierarchy. On top sit the native French; under them come the naturalized French, then the Spanish, Italians, Maltese, and other Europeans. Beyond the colonial pale are the Jews and Algerians. More than the linguistic and class differences that pull the Europeans apart, a shared history, culture, and religion push them together. Two additional, negative ties bind them: their shared antipathy for the Jews and Algerians. Rather than mirroring *pied noir* reality, Robinet constructed in the Cagayous saga a literary text “invested with ideology”; he produced for them a “fable of identity.”¹¹⁹

This is especially clear at the level of language, *pataouète*. If we distinguish between linguistic practice—spoken *pataouète*—and the literary representation of that practice—the Cagayous tales—then the argument that Robinet somehow unproblematically “phonographed” the *pataouète* he heard is untenable. Whereas the Algerianists wanted to see in *pataouète* the genesis of a new language, which symbolized for them the formation of a new people, I follow critic Paul Siblot, who argues that “*pataouète* never constituted a stable linguistic system formed from languages in contact. It is a literary elaboration, a deliberate construction by Musette which homogenizes and normalizes individual, variable idiolects” spoken in Algiers at the time.¹²⁰

In conclusion, therefore, society and culture developed dialectically to shape settler colonialism in Algeria. Not simply formed in this period, this colonial society

¹¹⁹ Siblot, “Mises en texte de la pluriglossie dans la littérature coloniale,” 133; and Siblot, “Un essai d’élaboration identitaire,” 231. To clinch his argument that “the construction [of the text] was motivated by a sense of the collective identity that it in fact helped to promote,” Siblot uses as an example an official speech Gautier delivered in 1930 in his capacity as rector of the University of Algiers as part of the celebrations of the centennial of the French conquest. Gautier celebrated the settlers as a “new race,” using as his example the “admirable fidelity” of Cagayous’ *pataouète* to that spoken by the settlers. Siblot rejects Gautier’s argument, contending that Gautier mistook the *pataouète* actually spoken with its literary representation in the Cagayous texts. I agree with Siblot’s argument, but he has his dates wrong. While the essay containing Gautier’s remarks was indeed published in his collection, Emile-Felix Gautier, *Un siècle de colonisation* (Paris, 1930), in the centennial series, it was first published ten years earlier in Gautier’s *L’Algérie et le métropole* and merely reprinted in 1930. See Siblot, “Mises en texte de la pluriglossie dans la littérature coloniale,” 133; and Siblot, “Un essai d’élaboration identitaire,” 230–31.

¹²⁰ Paul Siblot, “L’Algérianisme: Fonctions et dysfonctions d’une littérature coloniale,” in Jean-Louis Joubert, ed., *Le roman colonial (Suite)* (Paris, 1990), 88.

formed itself; it became conscious of itself. In Algiers and elsewhere, people began to refer to the "Algerian people," to "the Algerians" around the turn of the twentieth century. And by "Algerians," they meant the European community taken together, the native and naturalized French, the Spanish, Italians, and Maltese who had or were in the process of giving up one collective identity and assuming another. Thus, at one blow, the *pieds noirs* asserted their dominance self-consciously and at the same time neatly obliterated both Algerians and Jews in the very terms they used to describe themselves. When Cagayous is asked, "Are you French?" he answers, "We are Algerians!"¹²¹

This is where Cagayous fits in historical and literary terms. Cagayous passed into the popular imagination and contributed thereby to what was becoming *pied noir* identity. Cagayous presented to the nascent *pieds noirs* an image of their collectivity; in recognizing themselves in him, they recognized their colonial kin. Surely such cultural productions and literary artifacts contributed substantially to just the sort of collective identity that the *pieds noirs* manifested at the turn of the century when they clamored for increasing autonomy if not outright separation from France.

IT IS HARD NOT TO LIKE CAGAYOUS. But beware the seduction of the text, "the pleasures of imperialism," in Edward Said's phrase. The more we laugh with Cagayous, the more we gloss over, the less we engage his politics. Yet how must Algerians reading him at the time—surely there were some—have reacted? What were their responses as they tried and failed to locate themselves in tales set in the Casbah as well as Bab el Oued?

It is one thing to laugh with Cagayous—this *petit blanc* getting back at his social superiors. But it is quite another, and rather more sobering, to acknowledge the racist family resemblance between Cagayous and other practitioners of the colonial novel, to consider the light Cagayous sheds on the occlusions of Camus, for example. Within the field of the colonial Algerian novel, the silences, the absences, of both Cagayous and Camus begin to make all too much sense: why the Algerian whom Meursault kills in *The Stranger* is nameless; why in *The Plague* the Algerians tend to disappear in a fable allegedly about totalitarianism in Europe. Likewise, who purchased the 1931 Gallimard collection of the tales, published one year after the centennial of the French invasion of Algeria, that "public relations campaign of dithyrambs and clichés"?¹²² And who bought the 1972 republication of the 1931 collection, ten years after Algerian independence in 1962? Surely the same people who bought and continue to buy products of the market in colonial nostalgia, the colonial detritus of French Algeria, would find the Cagayous tales a valued addition to their collection of "nostalgérie."

Today, some of these same people also subscribe to the views of political parties

¹²¹ Quoted in Gabriel Audisio, *Jeunesse de la Méditerranée* (Paris, 1935), 113; Yahiaoui, *Roman et société coloniale*, 17; Siblot, "Pères spirituels," 52; Siblot, "Un essai d'élaboration identitaire," 227; and Déjeux, *La littérature algérienne contemporaine*, 18–19.

¹²² Charles-Robert Ageron, *Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine*, Vol. 2 (1871–1954) (Paris, 1979), 407. See also Jacques Berque, *French North Africa: The Maghrib between Two World Wars*, Jean Stewart, trans. (New York, 1967), 222–24.

such as Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National (FN).¹²³ To be sure, only a number of former settlers remain diehard supporters of French Algeria; only a fraction of them vote FN. Yet the overlaps are striking. Allegations that Le Pen tortured two Algerians during his tour of duty in Algeria in 1956–1957 continue to dog him. Although Le Pen directs his attacks at immigrants in general, it is clear that “immigrants” functions as a codeword for “non-Europeans,” that “non-Europeans” stands for “North Africans,” that “North Africans” stands for “Algerians.”¹²⁴ In Le Pen's FN, we see manifested not only racism directed at Algerians specifically and non-European immigrants generally but also anti-Semitism.¹²⁵

Benjamin Stora characterizes the present attitude of the French toward the war that brought Algeria independence as *l'oubli*, forgetting, and that of the Algerians as *la gangrène*, the festering sore.¹²⁶ If Fanon were alive today, what would he say about Algeria, about the civil war raging there that has killed an estimated 50,000 people since 1992?¹²⁷

After the uprising of 1988 when for a brief period other parties were allowed, Slim drew a cartoon depicting a continuing decline for Algeria: a peasant soldier who fought against the French during the Revolution stands on a pedestal; next to him and lower is a general, symbolizing the less favorable military regime now in power; still lower is a bearded Islamic fundamentalist and member of the now banned *Front islamique du salut* (FIS); and finally, a hole in the ground represents a grave for Algeria.¹²⁸

Surely Fanon would have much to say today, since already in 1961 he discussed at length the “national bourgeoisie” in a postcolonial, post-independence situation:

it is absolutely necessary to oppose vigorously and definitively the birth of a national bourgeoisie and a privileged caste.

the bourgeoisie chooses the solution that seems to it the easiest, that of the single party . . . The single party is the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous, and cynical.

The bourgeois leaders . . . imprison national consciousness in sterile formalism . . . The living expression of the nation is the moving consciousness of the whole of the people . . .

¹²³ “In recent years, there has been much talk about racism and anti-racism . . . This racism feeds primarily on the defeat of a people, of a nation. The [French] invaders saw in their victory clear proof of their superiority. It even became rational to occupy a country and subdue the inhabitants, since they were to be ‘civilized.’ . . . The National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen . . . reactivates this kind of colonial racism.” Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli*, 288–89.

¹²⁴ As Benjamin Stora puts it, “The problem of immigration lays bare an obsessive conflict that has never been resolved. Behind the ‘Arab,’ the ‘North African’ and behind the ‘North African,’ the ‘Algerian.’” Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli*, 286. On the electoral sociology of the FN, see Nonna Mayer and Pascal Perrineau, eds., *Le Front national à découvert* (Paris, 1989), esp. 38, 43–44, 50, 96, 148, 163–64, 230–32, 251, 311. On Le Pen and torture in Algeria, see Edwy Plenel and Alain Rollat, eds., *La République menacée: Dix ans d'effet Le Pen* (Paris, 1992), 225; Jonathan Marcus, *The National Front and French Politics: The Resistible Rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen* (New York, 1995), 31–32, 34; and Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli*, 290–91.

¹²⁵ Marcus, *National Front and French Politics*, 125–29. Olivier d'Ormesson left the FN in 1987 when he realized that Le Pen believed in “historical revisionism,” namely that the Holocaust had never taken place.

¹²⁶ Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli*.

¹²⁷ In addition to the references at note 11 above, contemporary news about Algeria is available on-line from Azzedine Layachi at layachi@acf2.nyu.edu.

¹²⁸ Ibrahim, “Algerian-in-Exile,” 8.

The national government, if it wants to be national, ought to govern by the people and for the people, for the outcasts and by the outcasts.¹²⁹

Imagining Fanon on Algeria today opens up the possibility of rereading Fanon on Algeria before his death in 1961.

¹²⁹ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 200, 164–65, 204–05. “It is in his study of the national bourgeoisie that we can see Fanon most clearly as a revolutionary, not merely an anti-colonialist. For him, the new leaders of Africa were notable chiefly for their ability to manipulate slogans, the better to enable them to profit from the perquisites of power.” Edmund Burke III, “Frantz Fanon: A Retrospective Review,” orig. ms., 13–14. (I thank Edmund Burke for giving me a copy of this manuscript, the published version of which, “Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*,” “was unfortunately mangled in the editorial process.”)

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Appendix

Cagayous Publication Data in Chronological Order

"Les histoires de Cagayous," newspaper columns that appeared in *Le Turco*, March 3, 1895–June 18, 1896, and in *La revue algérienne* beginning February 1, 1896.

Cagayous: Pochades algériennes (Algiers: Imprimerie de la Revue Algérienne, 1896), 160 pp. Includes the majority of pieces previously published in *Le Turco* and *La revue algérienne*. This volume went on sale January 30, 1896.

Les amours de Cagayous: Pochades algériennes (Algiers: Imprimerie de la Revue Algérienne, 1896), 133 pp. Includes pieces previously published in *Le Turco* beginning with the issue of November 28, 1895. This volume went through two editions.

Cagayous antijuif (Algiers: Ernest Mallebay, 1898), 164 pp. This volume went through two editions. After this volume, most of the Cagayous tales were published in sixteen-page chapbooks, which went on sale each Wednesday for 10 centimes.

La sortie de Barberousse (1896), chapbook, included in *Cagayous partout* (Algiers: Imprimerie Victor Rollet, November 25, 1905).

Cagayous à la caserne (Algiers: Imprimerie Joseph Angelini, 1899), 207 pp. Consists of fourteen chapbooks published separately and now bound together.

Cagayous à l'Exposition (Algiers: Imprimerie Joseph Angelini, 1901), 224 pp. Consists of fourteen chapbooks previously published October 3, 1900–January 2, 1901.

La lanterne de Cagayous (Algiers: Imprimerie Joseph Angelini, 1901), 224 pp. Consists of fourteen chapbooks previously published June 20, 1901–September 18, 1901. Cagayous' *antitout* newspaper.

Cagayous candidat (1902). A chapbook included in *Cagayous partout*. Cagayous runs for election as a deputy to parliament.

Cagayous à la mairie (Algiers: Imprimerie Joseph Angelini, May 1902). A chapbook included in *Cagayous partout*. The tale concerns the municipal elections of June 1, 1902.

Cagayous et la guerre (Algiers: Imprimerie Victor Rollet, February 25, 1904). A chapbook included in *Cagayous partout*. The war in the title is the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905.

Cagayous à la fête (Algiers: Imprimerie Victor Rollet, April 23, 1905). A chapbook included in *Cagayous partout*. Concerns the visit of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra of England.

Cagayous à la course (Algiers: Imprimerie Victor Rollet, May 4, 1905). A chapbook included in *Cagayous partout*. Published on the occasion of the Algiers-Toulon motorboat race organized by *Le matin*.

Au miracle (Algiers: Imprimerie Victor Rollet, 1905). A chapbook included in *Cagayous partout*. Concerns a celebrated healer named Pons.

Cagayous partout (Algiers: Imprimerie Victor Rollet, November 25, 1905), 112 pp. Groups together the following seven chapbooks published previously: *La sortie de Barberousse*, *Cagayous candidat*, *Cagayous à la mairie*, *Cagayous et la guerre*, *Cagayous à la fête*, *Cagayous à la course*, and *Au miracle*.

Le mariage de Cagayous (Algiers: Imprimerie Victor Rollet, 1906), 224 pp. Consists of fourteen chapbooks.

Le divorce de Cagayous (Algiers: Imprimerie Victor Rollet, 1906), 208 pp. Consists of thirteen chapbooks originally published February 27–May 23, 1906.

Cagayous philosophe (Algiers: Imprimerie Victor Rollet, February 27, 1906), 27 pp. Sold for 1.5 francs.

Cagayous à la lutte (Algiers: Papeterie Gojosso, March 2, 1909), chapbook.

Cagayous et Pickman (Algiers: Papeterie Gojosso, March 14, 1909), chapbook.

Cagayous chauffeur (Algiers: Papeterie Gojosso, 1909), 192 pp. Consists of twelve chapbooks originally published March 21, 1909–June 5, 1909.

Cagayous aviateur (Algiers: Papeterie Gojosso, November 28, 1909), chapbook.

“Cagayous poilu,” a thirty-two-installment newspaper serial that appeared in *L'écho d'Alger*, March 5, 1919–May 11, 1920, but that was never published as a collection.

Le mariage de Cagayous (Algiers: Imprimerie administrative Franck et Solal, 1927). Reprint of 1906 edition.

Cagayous: Ses meilleures histoires (Paris: Gallimard, 1931).

Les amours de Cagayous (Algiers: Imprimerie Nord-Africaine, 1949). Reprint edition of 3,520 copies.

Le mariage de Cagayous (Algiers: Baconnier, 1949). Reprint edition of 3,520 copies.

Cagayous à la caserne (Algiers: Imprimerie Nord-Africaine, 1950). Reprint edition of 3,520 copies.

Cagayous. Ses meilleures histoires (Paris: Balland, 1972). Reprint of 1931 edition.

SOURCES FOR APPENDIX: Gabriel Audisio, introduction, in Auguste Robinet [Musette], *Cagayous: Ses meilleures histoires* (Paris, 1931); Alain Calmes, *Le roman colonial en Algérie avant 1914* (Paris, 1984); Jean Déjeux, *Djoh'a: Héros de la tradition orale arabo-berbère* (Sherbrooke, Quebec, 1978); and Marcel Philibert, "Bibliographie des 'Cagayous' de Musette," in Lilian Husson, "Cagayous, Fils de Bab el Oued" (typewritten manuscript in author's possession, 1947), i-vii.

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